



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 24, 2020

Day 37

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
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Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, QC, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),
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Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

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United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 24, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power or desire to please or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us this afternoon are several guests, and some of them are the guests of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. They are summer intern Mikayla Janssen and her parents Bill and Cheryl Janssen. Welcome to the Assembly today.

Also, guests of the Minister of Service Alberta: the cofounders of the Respect Group, Wayne McNeil and Sheldon Kennedy, and from the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre, Mark Jones. Hon. members, please welcome them to our Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, from time to time members will speak in both official languages. In this case there is a translation that has been provided for you on the tabling table.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

La Fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste

Ms Goodridge: Merci, M. le Président. La fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, ou simplement la Saint-Jean, était à ses débuts une fête religieuse. Mais au fil des années, la célébration de cette journée s'est transformée en une fête qui exprime la vitalité de la langue française et des peuples qui parlent cette langue partout au pays. En général, les communautés de l'Alberta s'organisent des événements pour célébrer la Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Comme pour de nombreuses autres célébrations observées par la Francophonie dans la province, la fête de la Saint-Jean compte de la musique entraînante, des mets délicieux provenant des diverses cultures francophones.

En tant que province de choix pour de nombreux migrants et immigrants francophones, l'Alberta se trouve enrichie par la diversité de la Francophonie albertaine. Une langue commune, une multitude de cultures: voilà ce qui rend cette célébration encore plus exceptionnelle. Grâce à ses communautés florissantes, la Francophonie de l'Alberta est celle dont la population connaît la croissance la plus rapide au Canada. En tant que gouvernement, nous reconnaissons la valeur de la langue française pour notre économie, car elle nous permet de diversifier nos activités commerciales, de stimuler les exportations et les importations, et de contribuer à la création des emplois et à la croissance.

Aujourd'hui, alors que nos concitoyens albertains et canadiens célèbrent cette journée, je tiens à leur souhaiter, à toutes et à tous, une bonne fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Bien qu'ils ne puissent pas célébrer de la même façon cette année, je suis certaine que peu importe la façon dont ils marquent cette journée, la joie de vivre de la Francophonie canadienne sera au rendez-vous.

M. le Président, I thank all members of this Assembly for their continued support of Francophonie in Alberta.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The feast of St. John the Baptist, or simply St. John's Day, was in those early days a religious feast. But over the years the celebration of this day has evolved into a celebration that expresses the vitality of the French language and the people who speak it across the country. Typically, communities across Alberta hold events recognizing St. John the Baptist celebrations. As with many celebrations observed by Francophonie in the province, there's lively music and delectable foods from the various francophone cultures.

As a province of choice for many francophone migrants and immigrants, we are enriched by the diversity of Alberta's Francophonie. One language, a multitude of cultures: that is what makes this celebration even more exceptional. Alberta's Francophonie is thriving, with its population growing the fastest in Canada. As a government we recognize the value of speaking French to our economy as it provides for diversification of trade, boosts exports and imports, and helps create jobs and growth.

Today, as our fellow Albertans and Canadians celebrate this day, I would like to wish them all a happy Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day. Although they cannot celebrate in the same way this year, I am sure that no matter how they mark this day, the joie de vivre of Canada's Francophonie will be there. [As submitted]

The Speaker: Merci beaucoup, and a happy Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day to you as well.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Victims of Crime Fund

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 16, if passed, will take money away from victims of crime to pay for other priorities. It will have a lasting effect on the lives of victims in this province. Victims and the organizations who support them have been speaking out across the province, but the UCP just don't seem to be listening. Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, the Alberta Restorative Justice Association: these are just some of the agencies speaking out against the changes made in this bill, not to mention the scores of survivors coming forward, reliving their trauma to tell their stories to try and make this government stop these awful changes.

The minister has said repeatedly that this is about growing the pie. Well, that isn't what victims' organizations who are being cut have to say, and if it is the truth, if the minister only intends to use the new funding coming into the victims of crime fund to pay for police, then why did the UCP use their majority to shut down an amendment that would ensure that 75 per cent of the funds were reserved for victims? We've proposed amendments to ensure victims, especially children, have access. Sending a committee to consult after the changes are already law is not a sufficient answer. Consultation should have been done before these changes were made.

No one is saying that drug treatment court is a bad thing. It's a very good thing. I was happy to see the UCP fund it. I even praised the minister for it, but that was when the government was paying for it. Asking victims of crime to pay for it is quite another thing. We should not be pitting elements of the system against each other. We should not be asking victims to pick up the tab for the justice system. They have already lost enough.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

St. Mary River Drownings

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These past couple of weeks have been devastating for Cardston-Siksika, particularly the Hutterite community. On June 10 three teenage girls were tragically lost when they drowned in the St. Mary River. As if that wasn't tragic enough, this past Sunday I joined hundreds of volunteers to locate the body of a four-year-old boy who also was claimed by the same river. As a parent I can't even begin to comprehend the devastation that these families are feeling. My heart breaks for these families, and my thoughts and prayers are with them.

Over the past few days prayers, well-wishes, and condolences have been showered upon the community, and I'd like to take a moment to thank all those who have sent those prayers and many efforts to come together to help lay these children to rest. I need to thank hundreds of men and women who came out together in the search and rescue effort. I want to thank Lethbridge Area Search and Rescue, Search & Rescue Alberta, southeast search and rescue out of Medicine Hat, the Hutterian Emergency Aquatic Response Team from Manitoba, the Lethbridge fire and EMS along with Lethbridge fire drive team.

I also want to thank First Nations elders, the Blood Tribe band and council as well as all the Hutterite community members who lent a helping hand. I want to thank Staff Sergeant Kevin Wright, Colonels McCloud, Walsh, and Steele, and all the staff at the Raymond and Cardston RCMP detachments; the RCMP helicopter crew from Edmonton; the RCMP jet boat crew from Redcliff; and all the members belonging to the RCMP who came out and lent a helping hand. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Environment and Parks, his ministry, his chief of staff, Pam Livingston, and all those who helped from that department and the ministry.

Mr. Speaker, I know I have missed some names, probably far too many to keep going on, but I want to thank every single person who dedicated their time to helping the families during this difficult moment. All of you will forever hold a special place in our hearts. May these beautiful souls rest in peace.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has a statement to make.

Keystone XL Pipeline Provincial Equity

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would you gamble your child's education or your health care on something with less than a 50 per cent chance of succeeding? The Premier and his government did and don't have a plan to improve their chances. Let me explain. The government is supporting the Keystone XL pipeline with \$7.5 billion of public money. This support was necessary because they couldn't secure private investment for the project at the time due to the risk of Joe Biden becoming the U.S. President and revoking the presidential permit.

We in our caucus sincerely hope that this pipeline will be built and that the project is successful, but to no one's surprise Joe Biden has already stated that he will revoke the presidential permit if elected. Currently FiveThirtyEight polling has Joe Biden leading by almost 10 per cent. Oddsmakers think Joe Biden's chances of winning are at 55 per cent. *The Economist* estimates his chances to win the Electoral College at 87 per cent. Mr. Speaker, these are terrible odds. Right now the government has a better chance of winning a coin flip than the project being successful.

The Minister of Energy said that she doesn't have a plan to do anything about this and is planning like this is not a reality. Albertans deserve better. Keystone XL's success would be welcome news for our energy sector. The government guaranteed

\$7.5 billion, \$7.5 billion that the government might not even have. Recently the government fired 20,000 educational assistants because it urgently needed to save \$120 million. Albertans deserve a real plan to get this pipeline built. Otherwise, I'm afraid that this is not much more than a taxpayer-funded gambling rush for the government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40 Support for Businesses Affected by COVID-19

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has done incredible damage to the province of Alberta, both in lives lost and economic impacts rippling through our province. The communities I have the privilege to represent are made up of small and large businesses, entrepreneurs, and employees of all kinds. In many ways my constituency is a fantastic representation of the hard-working, can-do spirit Albertans are known for. The people of Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright forged a unique identity while contributing gainfully to the great Albertan economy.

Mr. Speaker, this government was elected to restore the Alberta advantage, but over the course of the pandemic several of the businesses in my constituency have had their customer traffic reduced and their access to the market denied, with all too predictable consequences.

Richard Winacott of Polar Coachlines lost all of his business early in the crisis. His company provided transportation for school trips, hockey teams, and other groups. He and his wife did not qualify for most of the federal or provincial relief, both professionally and personally, but their plight is very real.

Dr. Darren Phillips, an optometrist from Lloydminster, was shut down from the middle of March until just recently. He answers to both the Alberta and Saskatchewan regulators, which made his reopening unnecessarily confusing for both himself and his customers.

Iris Kynick, a local businesswoman and owner of Globe Footwear in Wainwright, was forced to close her doors while Walmart and other big-box stores were left open and allowed to sell shoes.

I mention these decent, hard-working Albertans not only to support the government in its relaunch Alberta strategy but also to implore the government to continue to press forward. These constituents are incredible Albertans, and so many like them deserve a chance to persevere and restore Alberta to the pinnacle of Canadian business once again. These are real lives, real businesses, and they represent the future of the Alberta economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Seniors' Clinic Funding

Ms Sigurdson: Sage is an extraordinary organization serving seniors in the Edmonton area. Until March 31 of this year they ran a wellness clinic that served seniors with complex needs. Nurse practitioners, physiotherapists, social workers, and pharmacists worked as a team addressing the many challenging issues the seniors faced. These professionals were laid off at the end of March, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving hundreds of seniors vulnerable at the worst possible time. Why did this happen? It happened because the UCP government cut funding to this cost-effective and transformational program.

Under our NDP government Sage Seniors Association was one of four community-based clinics utilizing nurse practitioners in a pilot program. This initiative was created in response to the complex wellness needs of seniors who require a variety of services. This program employed salaried nurse practitioners, who

could spend more time with patients as compared to the time allotted by family doctors. In addition, social workers would support seniors to navigate provincial programs and assist with fundamental needs such as affordable housing.

Supporting nurse practitioners to broaden their scope of practice was highlighted in the UCP's campaign platform and was recommended in the MacKinnon report. Tragically, in this obvious contradiction, the UCP government cancelled this program, leaving hundreds of seniors with complex needs without primary health care. The three other sites were set to expire in March. Decisions were to be made in April, but with COVID-19 uncertainty has plagued these much-needed services.

The current pandemic has taught us several lessons, but one of the most important is the need for a strong public health care system, one that we know addresses the shift in demographics to an aging population. A strong public health system that can manage unexpected viral outbreaks and gives timely care to Albertans is essential. The UCP government doesn't understand this. This puts seniors at considerable risk.

Alberta in Canada

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is a province that needs a fair deal. Our relationship with Canada has been complicated since 1905. Alberta's contributions to Canada have been immense while Canada's treatment of Alberta has been historically challenging for our province.

Mr. Speaker, despite Canada's domineering attitude towards Alberta, our province and its people have prospered. But that prosperity has only ever been achieved through constant struggles with the Laurentian elite, who have sought to impose their will on Alberta and have struggled to treat our province as a respected co-equal partner in Confederation. Our Premiers have had to constantly fight with the federal government to defend Alberta's rights and prosperity, with Premiers Brownlee, Manning, Lougheed, and Klein being notable historical examples.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's 115-year relationship with Canada can be summed up as one big unfair deal. That's why our government is committed to getting a fair deal for our province within our country. Now more than ever Alberta needs a fair deal with Canada. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to chart a better course for Albertans.

There are 4.3 million sparks of genius in our province. It is time, through a fair deal, to nurture them and see which ones can catch fire and become guiding lights for that is the Albertan way. We are a province of perseverance and ingenuity. Mr. Speaker, I have been asked many times: what is my guiding principle in politics? The answer is simple: Albertans first, Albertans always. That is my credo.

Thank you.

Edmonton and Calgary LRT Funding

Mr. Carson: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's two big cities might have a history of friendly competition, but we also have a lot in common: two world-famous hockey teams, two nationally acclaimed public universities, diverse and growing populations, and two light rail infrastructure projects held up by this UCP government.

Last year this UCP government added a clause to their funding agreement which would allow them to withdraw funds from the valley line west LRT and the green line with only 90 days notice and without cause. The uncertainty caused by this has cascaded down to construction workers, companies looking to bid on these projects, and investors in residential and commercial developments along the lines.

Because of the heavy-handed clause, Mayor Iveson said that he didn't know what to tell investors who were once interested.

It's been almost a year since the minister announced these changes, and so far this government has said nothing to restore investor certainty for these vital projects. The west extension of the valley line LRT will connect students, working parents, and seniors to the rest of the city via rapid and reliable public transit. Communities have been waiting for an extension line for years, and they need answers.

Last week, after the city of Calgary almost unanimously approved the green line, the Minister of Transportation said that he would be doing, quote, a thorough analysis of the project and that he would, quote, keep an open mind. Through the minister's statement it is clear that the UCP will do anything to undermine the green line and, in turn, the democratically elected city councils in our large municipalities.

Despite years of promises, despite huge economic and social benefits, despite poll after poll indicating that the majority of the public supports this project, the UCP are still threatening to withhold funding. Albertans across this province are demanding access to inclusive, affordable, and reliable public transit. Their city councillors are listening and acting on this, and it's about time the minister did, too.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane.

Mefloquine Use by the Canadian Armed Forces

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been communicating with a constituent about the long-term effects of the drug mefloquine. This veteran courageously served Canada, and he, like many other soldiers who served overseas, particularly in Afghanistan and the Middle East, suffers from intense PTSD, and it appears that mefloquine played a significant role.

This antimalarial drug was commonly dispensed to Canadian Forces while on tour. Members did not have a choice in taking this medication, nor were they familiar with its side effects, but they took it, trusting the drug was safe. Some reactions are minor and subside quickly. Others are more serious, longer lasting, and permanent, including hallucinations, aggressive behaviour, paranoia, and suicidal thoughts. Some studies have been conducted on the military's use of mefloquine and those who experience PTSD. In the U.S. American service members are being treated and compensated for claims linking their health conditions to its use. Unfortunately, in Canada this is not the case. A class-action suit was dismissed for delay in 2018.

Since then a mass tort was initiated so Canadian Forces members and veterans could claim damages against the Canadian government to get the help that they need. Last September Trudeau's government launched proceedings against a mefloquine manufacturer yet at the same time brought forward a motion to stay this mass tort, wishing to absolve themselves of their responsibility.

Enough is enough. These vets require our support. Standing by our Armed Forces members needs to be more than words. Without hesitation they put their lives on the line for this country, and they deserve their country to support them in their time of need. Mr. Speaker, they are not asking for more than we can give. They are asking for what they are owed.

Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

Bills 26 and 27

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We cannot allow our democracy to be bought and paid for by the wealthy and the powerful, yet bills 26 and 27 reflect policies that would allow hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars to be raised and spent by special interests and big corporations to influence public opinion, with almost no oversight. The Premier writes the questions, decides who votes, where they vote, when they vote, and how they vote. Why is the Premier clearing the way for his big-money donors to flood the airwaves, influence public opinion, and purchase democracy?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, here we have the New Democratic Party arguing that the greatest exercise of democracy, a referendum, is undemocratic. The only thing that's undemocratic here is the NDP because they oppose the right of citizens to pass judgment by the millions on matters of public importance. But we, this government, this Conservative government, believe that the people know best on big issues about our future, and that's why we're bringing forward the power to let the people decide through referendum votes. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, if this was about the people, the Premier would ban corporations from running these referendums, but he didn't brief the media, he didn't brief the opposition, he didn't let his minister answer questions because he knows that's not what he did, and it's wrong. His bill will allow limitless groups to spend as much as \$350,000 without an audit. That's how you hide money. This is cynical opportunism at its worst. Why is the Premier writing legislation that prevents Albertans from knowing who gets paid when they run their big donor campaigns?

Mr. Kenney: They're doubling down, Mr. Speaker, in their opposition to the purest form of democracy. The very first democracy in history, the Athenian democracy, had referendums thousands of years ago. Our neighbouring provinces, B.C. and Saskatchewan, permit referendums brought forward by the government. Alberta used to do that, and here's the good news: we are going to keep our platform commitment to Albertans to let them do so again through this bill, that will give the people the final say on important public matters. What a shame that the New Democratic Party has become the Old Autocratic Party.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, anyone who reads the legislation knows this isn't about strengthening democracy. This is about the Premier giving himself the power to create a big money machine. He wants full control over which issues will be put to Albertans, and he wants to allow his rich friends and donors to write cheques from the shadows. This is not a civilian-driven process; this is a Premier-driven power trip. Why is he using this Legislature to give himself more power to hide the money being spent by his rich corporate friends and insiders on our democracy?

Mr. Kenney: Firstly, Mr. Speaker, the government giving away the power to make final decisions on big issues to the people: only a bunch of socialists could consider that undemocratic. When it comes to money, it's true that the NDP affiliate called the Alberta Federation of Labour, which is a part of the NDP legally, spent \$1.8 million in third-party campaigns. But here's the good news: we're going to get that big money out of Alberta politics, we're going to close the loophole that allows that NDP affiliate to operate as a

third-party expenditure, and we're going to limit contributions of third parties to \$30,000. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

Bill 26

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the legislation allows the Premier to write a referendum question straight out of his next election platform, knowing that he has big donors and special interests waiting in the wings, each of whom can spend \$349,000 with no audit. That is nothing more than a way to bring big, corporate, dark money back in to buy him votes. If it's not, if it's really about Albertans participating in democratic referendums, why won't the Premier ban unions and corporations from influencing this democratic process? Why not?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are going to ban – we are going to ban – political parties like the NDP from manipulating the laws. Here's what happens. The Alberta Federation of Labour is a legal, constitutional wing of the NDP. They sit on the NDP board, yet they spent nearly \$2 million. That's basically partisan money laundering, and we're going to stop it. We're going to keep our word to get big money out of Alberta politics, and we're going to limit contributions to third-party expenditures to \$30,000 to stop the NDP's big money from infecting our politics.

Ms Notley: So we heard it here. The Premier is going to ban unions from participating and open the door to corporations to spend more. You know, this Premier's record on democracy is questionable at best. In his first leadership race he upended tradition and broke his promise when he refused to release his donors list. In his second leadership race he sparked an RCMP investigation and multiple probes by Elections Alberta. Most recently he broke every convention in the Commonwealth by abusing his power to fire an independent officer of the Legislature. Albertans cannot trust this Premier to run the democracy. Withdraw the bill.

Mr. Kenney: Albertans can't trust a government that's empowering Albertans with referendum votes. In the name of democracy they want us to pull the biggest democratic reform in decades introduced in this province. No, Mr. Speaker. We believe in the common sense of the common people. We believe that Albertans should have the final say on important matters about our future. We believe that we should get big money out of politics, like the millions spent by NDP union bosses, and we're going to keep our word.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the biggest democratic reform in the history of this province was when our government banned corporate and union donations from elections, and this government is bringing them back in, bringing them back in so they can play politics on referendums that this Premier is writing, not the people of Alberta. It is a travesty. Why won't he withdraw this legislation?

Mr. Kenney: I'm starting to wonder: why is Team Angry so angry about democracy? There's only one answer: because they don't trust the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. That's why they fibbed to Albertans about their intention to bring in the carbon tax. But I'll tell you this. You've got the ATA, who put in \$275,000 in advertising before the last election; \$200,000 from the United Steelworkers; \$2.2 million from the Health Sciences Association. We're going to get that big money out of Alberta politics with a \$30,000 cap on those contributions.

The Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition for the third set of questions.

Ms Notley: Well, we could talk a lot about the Used Car Dealers Association and the promises this Premier made to them to get money from them. Let me tell you: corporate money has far outweighed union money. But the point is that you take it out, and it's not a problem. These guys are putting it back in, and they're doing it by pretending to Albertans that referendums are somehow going to be democratic when it's about buying votes, not respecting votes. Ban union and corporate money in referendums, and we'll support your bill.

Mr. Kenney: No, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry, but I stand here on behalf of 4.4 million Albertans saying that we have confidence in their judgment to render a decision through democratic referenda, the purest form of democracy possible, on critical issues. Today we see the NDP revealed for what it really is, an ideological party with a narrow left-wing base that is angry with the decision that Albertans made in the last election and is unwilling to entrust Albertans with the governance of their own future. We disagree. We will proceed with this important democratic reform.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, our party believes that democracy is about votes. Our party believes democracy is not about how big a cheque your corporate donors write to you. That is why we took big money out of politics. This Premier is putting it back in. A simple answer: yes or no? Ban corporate and union donations from referendum campaigns. Yes or no? If not, why doesn't he trust Albertans to just vote?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Premier, I've got a list here of NDP-supporting unions that contributed \$4.8 million – \$4.8 million – to support the NDP over the past couple of years. Our platform says that we will remove big money from Alberta politics by imposing a \$30,000 limit on donor contributions to political action committees and by closing the AFL loophole. I think that's the real reason they're running scared. They don't want Albertans to be able to decide on big issues, and they want to keep getting millions through the back door from unions.

2:00

The Speaker: I can only imagine that the Premier will be tabling that document. Otherwise, it looks a lot like a prop.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about a piece of legislation that was introduced that includes references to policies that have nothing to do with what the Premier is talking about right now. What they have do with is bringing corporate money back into provincial election campaigns after the members opposite told Albertans that they agreed it should stay out. They were dishonest. Their party was dishonest with Albertans when they said that they would keep corporate dollars out of provincial election campaigns. Why did the UCP lie to Albertans about that?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, under the legislation the NDP brought in, unions and corporations can contribute unlimited amounts of money to third-party advertising campaigns, including those that perhaps would be on referendums. You know why they did that? So they could get \$5 million of union support. We're going to shut the door on the NDP big-money election scam. Moreover, we're going to give Albertans the final say on big issues through referendums because unlike the NDP, we believe in direct democracy and the judgment of common people in this province.

Victims of Crime Fund

Member Irwin: The UCP's cruel Bill 16 takes away supports from survivors of crime at a time when they need those supports the most. Survivors are speaking out, multiple victims' services agencies are speaking out, and now municipal leaders are speaking out, too. Red Deer county councillor Christine Moore called the actions of the UCP a classic example of robbing Peter to pay Paul and said it was grossly unfair. To the Premier: you're on the record stating the need for supports for survivors of sexual and domestic violence, so how can you possibly justify the raiding of the victims of crime fund, which helps those survivors?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I was in Red Deer just last week, when we announced the establishment of a new drug treatment court in that city, and the mayor of Red Deer was there and was excited about that. You know why we were able to bring a drug treatment court, a compassionate area in the justice system, to Red Deer? Because we are expanding and growing the victims of crime fund by 50 per cent, from \$40 million to \$60 million. The NDP are angry about that because for four years they did not do anything to expand drug treatment courts. We've already doubled them in Calgary and Edmonton. We're bringing them across Alberta.

Member Irwin: I was the victim of a serious random physical assault; I was hit multiple times before I was pushed down a flight of stairs, and then my attacker placed his hands around my throat and strangled me: those are the words of survivor Tarin Arndt, who shouldn't have to relive her traumatic experiences to get this government's attention. She applied to the victims of crime fund because it gave her hope, it gave her a safety net and assurances that she wouldn't have to pay for services for something she never asked for. She said that this bill feels like another criminal act, stealing from the victims who need it the most. To the Minister of Justice: what do I tell Tarin and the other survivors who are speaking out?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to have victims' services in this province. We're continuing to grow this program. We're engaging with them. The Member for Airdrie-East and the Member for Grande Prairie are currently working on their engagement plan with stakeholders to make sure that we have the best possible services for victims. No one should be a victim.

I want read this for people here: drug treatment court is the reason I am alive today; I was facing four years in jail for trafficking meth in Camrose and was so sick and deep in my addiction that my life was falling apart; my children and I were near death; today I am proud to say that I continue my life in recovery and advocate for those who struggle with addictions and mental health. That's what drug treatment courts do.

Member Irwin: We're talking about survivors, Minister, and many survivors are reliving traumatic experiences just so this Premier can understand the terrible consequences of this bill, and they shouldn't have to. Deb Tomlinson with the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services said, "If survivors . . . are going to make the difficult decision to enter the criminal justice system, they deserve support like that provided through the sexual assault centres and the Victims of Crime fund." Premier, your platform highlights the importance of addressing domestic and sexual violence. To the minister of status of women. You talk about supports for survivors, but I haven't heard you speak up for them. Why are you silent now?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, what I would say right now to those that have been victimized: don't listen to the NDP; they're trying to scare you. This government will continue to be there for you. This

government understands the issue. That's why we've brought forward laws like Clare's law. We're going to be there for victims. This is about making sure that we listen to Albertans and listen to their priorities. We were there in rural Alberta, where people are sleeping literally with axes under their bed. They're living in fear because the NDP did not listen to them for four years. This allows us to respond to victims across Alberta. It's a better policy. It's the right thing to do.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River has the call.

Referendum Legislation and Third-party Political Advertising

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Justice stood in this House and introduced legislation that will expand Alberta's ability to listen to Albertans directly through a referendum. Absurdly, the NDP today and their allies have claimed that somehow this is undemocratic, quote, unquote. To the Minister of Justice: for the benefit of those who are confused, including the opposition today, could you please explain how we're putting the power back in the hands of the people of Alberta?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to understand an NDP frame of reference. Trust me; I'm trying here. I really am. A referendum which is giving direct voice to the people as to what direction they want to go, giving power to people to make that determination as to what province they want: the NDP called that an antidemocratic power grab. It is shocking that they would take that view and think so little of the people of Alberta. We trust Albertans to make the right decisions about their future.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that the NDP and their close affiliate Gil McGowan from the Alberta Federation of Labour have claimed that letting Albertans campaign on referendums through third-party organizations is a problem and given that the election legislation passed by the former NDP government specifically allowed for participation of third-party groups through general elections, can the minister please tell us why he thinks the opposition supported third-party participation in the general election in their legislation but not now in referendums?

Mr. Schweitzer: Oh, Mr. Speaker. Oh, Gil. Gil is as always a treat, and I'm sure a lot of members opposite have his number on speed-dial. We're going to get his big money out of Alberta politics. The millions of dollars from the AFL: we're getting that out of Alberta politics. There's going to be a limit. We're proud to make sure that we empower Albertans to have a say in their future. Citizens initiatives, recall legislation, Senate elections, referendums: this is all about giving power back to Albertans. The NDP doesn't like that, and it makes their union bosses angry.

The Speaker: Peace River has the call.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that it seems the NDP position on referendums has more plot twists than an episode of *Tiger King* and given that the NDP and their affiliate Gab McGowan seem to have expressed concern that this legislation doesn't address citizen initiative referenda and given that it's revealing and comforting to know that they seem to at least have had a change of heart when it comes to citizen-initiated referenda, could the minister please let us know what the government's plan is for citizen-initiated referenda going forward?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, this is one of those situations. We don't know if the NDP are coming or going or coming or going, but one thing that we do know is that we're going to empower Albertans to have their voice. If they want a policy issue considered, our Legislature is going to have a committee that's going to review this issue, and we're going to be bringing forward legislation this fall to give Albertans that voice. They've been asking for it for a long time. We're going to give it to them. The NDP don't like it. I don't know if they're coming or going anymore. Maybe they'll support it; maybe they won't. It probably just depends. Maybe they need to talk to each other. We don't know. Twitter was all over the map last night. It was pretty enjoyable.

Thank you.

Environmental Monitoring

Mr. Schmidt: Yesterday the environment minister announced that he's allowing industry to avoid its environmental obligations for another three weeks. Even though the government says that it's safe to go to the movies or get a haircut, it's apparently still far too dangerous for a scientist to go outside to collect soil, air, or water samples. Now, the minister says that something magical will happen on July 15, when it will end and the danger will be past. Why exactly is it not safe for people to conduct that monitoring today?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this just shows again the ridiculousness of the NDP. That member is part of an opposition caucus who protested and tried to fight this Chamber returning during the height of COVID. He gets to sit inside this Chamber, socially distanced and in relative safety, because of the chief medical officer, and we took the same steps to help those that work for us in the energy industry. Those are moms and dads who go to work each and every day in the energy industry for this province, and us providing safety measures for them: you know, it was common sense at the time. We're proud of that. We would do it again to make sure because we stand with the energy workers inside this province.

2:10

Mr. Schmidt: Given that the minister's cynical use of a pandemic to let industry pollute without consequences has made international news and given that many Albertans are still skeptical of this government's shabby environmental record and failure to respond to climate change, can the minister tell us why it was more important to let industry off the hook than it was to protect Albertans' health and Alberta's environment?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's shocking to see that the NDP continue to attack the energy industry inside this province. We're proud of our environmental record inside this province. We're proud of the energy products that we produce. That type of language and that type of thought process that went into their government when they managed the energy industry inside this province are why we saw billions of dollars flee this province, and it's why Albertans fired them. The reality is that our environmental protections remain in place. They are the best in the world, and we are proud of them. We will continue to develop our economy and protect our environment because that's the Alberta way.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that if you want to protect the environment, you actually have to do the work and given that the minister's shameless giveaway to wealthy supporters has definitely violated First Nations' rights and given that the First Nations of Alberta are in fact heading to court over this very issue,

isn't it true that the minister changed the end date of his monitoring suspensions because he knew that they wouldn't stand up in court?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we adjusted the changes within the industry to coincide with phase 2 of the relaunch of the economy inside the province of Alberta. That makes sense for us to continue to be able to meet the chief medical officer recommendations, which have changed as a result of phase 2. The energy industry is capable of doing that, but in the early days of this process we were in a very different situation, making sure that PPE was going to the priority areas, making sure that we were able to give companies the opportunity to make sure that their employees were safe. To be clear, this government wants to protect all Albertans. That opposition doesn't want to protect oil and gas workers.

Calgary Storm Damage Costs

Mr. Sabir: There isn't a home north of McKnight Boulevard that wasn't affected; we're already struggling with the crisis of oil downturn, and this is over and above what people can cope with: that, Mr. Speaker, was Taradale resident Khalil Karbani speaking to the *Calgary Herald* about the devastating hailstorm in northeast Calgary. He's the same person who penned a letter to this Premier seeking emergency help to repair damages. To the Premier: have you responded to this letter? If not, next week is a constituency break. Will you meet with these groups and myself directly if I arrange that meeting? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt that the hailstorm that happened two weeks ago was devastating for all of the constituencies in Calgary northeast. I can tell you that myself and my MLA colleagues were on the ground during the storm, after the storm, and the days after, meeting with our constituents to help them through this terrifying ordeal, to make sure that they're connecting with their insurance companies, getting their documents notarized, to help them get through the coming weeks.

Mr. Sabir: Given that Khalil Karbani suffered \$20,000 in damages to his home and his vehicle is likely a writeoff and given that he has heard from others who are in worse shape – he said, and I quote: this is going to have a huge psychological effect on people – to the Premier. It seems your inaction and uncertainty are adding to people's stress. Why won't you act today, and why won't you commit to cover these damages for families now?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned, myself and my MLA colleagues were on the ground helping out our constituents in assessing the damage. I can tell you that the member opposite knows very well that it takes time to do the hydrology studies to determine what AEMA's response is going to be. But I can tell you that this was the perfect opportunity for us to work together to get our constituents through this terrible, terrible storm and the damage afterwards. I'm deeply disappointed that the member opposite decided to politicize this event as opposed to helping.

Mr. Sabir: Given that our community believes that this hail disaster should be treated the same as Fort McMurray and High River, who were quickly granted disaster designations after devastating fires and floods, and given that Misha, a resident of Saddle Ridge, said, and I quote, something should be done by government; I've never seen something like that, and I'm 55; I've lived in many countries and seen a lot of storms, end quote, Premier, explain why government acted fast to support Fort McMurray and

High River, but your government – your government, Premier – won't act to support northeast Calgary.

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, what a ridiculous notion. This government cares deeply about all Albertans, including the people in northeast Calgary. The member opposite knows very well what the process is to declare if the storm qualifies for a disaster recovery program. Again, this member is using this opportunity as a political motivation to enhance his own profile in that constituency, and he's not helping matters at all. We could have worked together to move forward, but he chose not to. I as well as my other MLA colleagues are focused on helping our constituents. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. members for Calgary-McCall and Calgary-Hays will come to order. That's predominantly because the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake is the only one with the call.

Treaty Day Celebrations

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Lesser Slave Lake is the proud home of many First Nations and indigenous peoples, all residing within Treaty 8 territory. Every year First Nations across the country celebrate Treaty Day, a day on which the indigenous people commemorate the signing of treaties with the government of Canada. It is also a time for nonindigenous people to learn more about indigenous culture and traditions. With COVID-19 still dominating news streams, what is the recommendation of the Minister of Indigenous Relations for folks who are preparing for their upcoming Treaty Day?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Treaty Day is commemorated throughout the province to honour the signing of the treaties, which are agreements between the chiefs of various First Nations and the government of Alberta. In Alberta we have First Nations communities in treaties 6, 7, and 8 territories, and celebrations are also held to acknowledge the unique cultures, histories, and contributions of the First Nations people and the many years of partnership with all Canadians. We have been in communication with the First Nations leadership, the Ministry of Health, and Indigenous Services Canada in developing appropriate health guidelines for possible events so that they can be held safely.

The Speaker: The Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you the minister for his answer. Given that public health restrictions have been loosened and given that Treaty Day celebrations are a big part of the government of Canada's relationship with indigenous people across this country, to the same minister: is the ministry working with these First Nations to ensure that their Treaty Day celebrations can continue while making sure that these celebrations are conducted in a safe manner?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Indigenous people not only have Treaty Day, of course, but various important ceremonial events this summer like the powwows and the sun dances. We're working closely with indigenous leadership in the province and trust that they are making decisions to both honour the ceremonial events and protect the health of their people. These events are full of social, artistic, spiritual, and cultural significance and meaning. Possible steps to protect public health at these events will include

physical distancing, precautions around the sharing of food, no public signing, and screening attendants for symptoms, just to name a few.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again to the minister for his answer. Given that Treaty Day celebrations are a tradition for both the government of Canada and indigenous people and given that these celebrations provide an opportunity for nonindigenous folks to learn more about the culture and traditions of the First Nations people, is the Ministry of Indigenous Relations working with First Nations to provide alternative solutions since traditional Treaty Day celebrations are cancelled for the time being?

The Speaker: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it is very important for First Nations communities and all Albertans to take time to commemorate the treaties and to celebrate First Nations culture. I recently co-hosted along with our Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women a virtual celebration for National Indigenous People Day this past weekend, with beautiful traditional songs and dance performances. I'm sure that with some creativity celebrations can still be held that are safe and inclusive and that adhere to restrictions. Again, we respect indigenous leadership to continue to make the best decisions on their ceremonial events and are working with the Minister of Health as to how to move forward safely.

Insurance Industry

Ms Phillips: Yesterday the Premier said that big insurance companies should slap a lawsuit on me and also asked me to name the profitable companies who are raising people's car insurance premiums so his friends could sue me. I'm happy to oblige. Security National took in \$139 million more in premiums than they paid out in 2018, then premiums went up by 10 per cent. Wawanesa took in \$104 million more than it paid out in '18, and premiums went up by 12 per cent. There are more. I posted them on my Facebook page. This question is for the Premier. Is it now a matter of government policy to encourage big insurance companies to sue me or anyone else for posting about their profits?

2:20

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition keep raising the issue of insurance, and I find that really perplexing given that they had four years to fundamentally deal with a problem that Albertans are experiencing with increasing claim costs and resulting increasing premiums. The members opposite did nothing to address the problem. Our government has initiated a panel report. They will be delivering a final report very shortly. We will go through that report, and we will deliver a solution – a lasting solution – for Albertans.

Ms Phillips: Well, given that the minister's claim about claims costs is proven false by his own superintendent of insurance and given that the Premier has denied disaster coverage for residents of northeast Calgary and given that many of them are left with nothing because insurance companies have denied their claim and given that now profitable insurance companies aren't helping people who have had to park their cars and reduce their insurance coverage because they lost their jobs during the pandemic, will the Premier or the Finance minister reverse their position and side with the

residents of northeast Calgary instead of their friends in big insurance companies?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, I too want to acknowledge the loss experienced by many Albertans in Calgary due to that very significant hailstorm. We're reaching out daily to IBC, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, to ensure that insurance companies are delivering on the policies for the individuals in Calgary who need assistance from their insurance companies these days. Calgary MLAs are reaching out to their constituents and assisting them. We will continue to support Albertans.

Ms Phillips: Given that it's possible that the Premier threatened to have me sued yesterday because I pointed out two things – first, that his close friend is now the lobbyist for the Insurance Bureau of Canada and, second, that when the Premier was asked about skyrocketing car insurance, he bragged that his own rates went down by 200 bucks, which actually shows how out of touch he is with ordinary people struggling to get by – is it now a matter of government policy to threaten to sue any Albertan who asks about lobbyists? Whose side is this government and this Premier really on?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, that is a ridiculous question. This government is on the side of Albertans and Alberta consumers. The study that we commissioned was commissioned in such a way to take an Alberta consumer perspective. We are ultimately concerned, and our goal is to ensure that Alberta motorists have fair, affordable, and effective insurance available to them. The NDP failed to deliver. We will not make that mistake. We will deliver to Albertans.

Support for Businesses Affected by COVID-19

Mr. Carson: Mr. Speaker, Canada's emergency commercial rent assistance program is failing many businesses. The UCP acknowledges that there are gaps in the program, yet they haven't filled them. The program is set to expire at the end of the month, and the minister has said that the eviction ban in Alberta will not be extended to businesses that access that program. So what happens at the end of June for businesses that the UCP has decided not to support? What will it take for this government to finally support small businesses?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've mentioned before in this House and we'll mention again, the federal CECRA program had some gaps. We identified them. Even though our contribution to the program will be an estimated \$67 million, the Commercial Tenancies Protection Act that we introduced protects tenants from evictions, late fees, penalties, rent increases. It also supports tenants and landlords to work together to come up with a rent payment plan that supports both of them. We know that they know what's best for them, and we trust them to work together to be successful.

Mr. Carson: Well, given that the federal-provincial program is not working for landlords or tenants and it prevents them from using what little help this province is offering them and given that all this UCP government has offered is more debt and deferral, with many of these businesses already struggling to survive, and given the CECRA program will expire before many of these businesses can even fully reopen, Minister, when will you take responsibility for

your failed programs and provide direct supports to Alberta businesses now?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've said before, the provincial supports and deferrals that we put in place from the very early days of the pandemic, totalling billions of dollars, help our job creators. All the measures that we've put in place, combined with the \$5,000 grant, with more information to be released on that shortly, give us amongst the highest level of supports of all provinces across Canada to support our job creators. Unlike the members opposite, we're not dictative or prescriptive in how the funds can be used. The \$5,000 grant can be used for rent relief.

Mr. Carson: Well, given that with the economic relaunch businesses have invested in reopening with the hopes that they could remain open but given that the spread of COVID-19 is unpredictable and businesses may need to close on the order of the chief medical officer of health, as we saw with restaurants here in Edmonton this week, and given that a sudden closure will reduce revenues and create more economic uncertainty for businesses, will the minister guarantee that no businesses will have to worry about being evicted after August 31 because they cannot pay their rent?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite talks about restaurants. Well, let me read a quote from Mark von Schellwitz, vice-president, western Canada, Restaurants Canada:

Restaurants Canada appreciates coming to the table with this much-needed commercial rent protection legislation. The inability to pay rent with little or no revenue for the past few months, combined with the inability to convince landlords to participate in the CECRA program or other rent relief arrangements, is the No.1 concern for the majority of Alberta's restaurants. The legislation introduced . . . will provide the time needed for restaurant tenants and their landlords to agree to long-term rent solutions without worrying about evictions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has the call.

Economic Relaunch Stage 2 Gathering Restrictions

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans everywhere have done a great job following the public health orders. Many areas like mine have almost no active cases. Actually, to date there are only three confirmed active cases in the entire central health region and no hospitalizations. Most of my constituents are relieved that we're now in phase 2 of the relaunch, but many are concerned with the restrictions that are still in place, including those on outdoor events, especially in rural Alberta. To the Minister of Health: will our government lift the outdoor crowd size restrictions to allow rodeos, team sports, and cultural events to get back to business and make sure they can remain a vital part of our communities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like you, I know that, very clearly, rodeos are an important summer tradition for Albertans, and we have responded to requests from rodeo operators and developed guidance to help reduce the risk of transmission among volunteers, workers, patrons, and athletes so rodeos can open. Stage 2 guidance currently recommends a limit of 100 spectators, provided that physical distancing can be maintained.

We're closely monitoring the spread of the virus, and in consultation with the chief medical officer of health we will adjust our restrictions on size of gatherings when it's safe to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many nonprofits that hold outdoor activities have business models that rely on attendance to function, and many would have the ability to social distance while greatly increasing crowd size. Given that many of these types of organizations across Alberta are finding it impossible to operate when they cannot allow enough attendees under current public health orders, to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: can you please inform this House on supports available for organizations hoping to host outdoor events as Alberta recovers from this crisis?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the great question. We've added guidelines for outdoor events on the Biz Connect website, so I encourage all businesses wanting to host an event to use those for the safety of staff and attendees. We've implemented billions of dollars of supports for our job creators throughout the pandemic, ranging from our \$350 million WCB payment program to our upcoming relaunch support grant, which will give businesses and nonprofits forced to close or curtail operations up to \$5,000 to use for whatever they need, and we know that they know how best to use those funds.

The Speaker: Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This House recently passed Motion 502, highlighting that rodeo is a culturally integral part of Alberta and still the backbone of many communities. Given that many businesses are gate-driven and are simply inoperable without larger crowds and given that many of these local organizations will not see next year if we can't fix this year, to the Minister of Health: how can public health protocols be implemented in the very near future to ensure that outdoor events like team sports, rodeos, and cultural experiences survive this public health emergency?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. There are ways to help reduce the spread of the virus in larger group settings. This can include masking in larger gatherings. We've also seen successful events with drive-in attendance, where spectators can remain in their vehicles. If two rodeo events – for example, barrel racing in one area and steer wrestling in another area – allow crowds to be separated, organizers could potentially increase in-person attendance. We know this is important. We're monitoring the virus and working with operators to find ways to ease restrictions while keeping Albertans safe.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

Bill 17 and Patient Consent

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Bill 17 has been making its way through the Legislature, we've been hearing concerns about how the bill is drafted and what it does and doesn't address. Given that one of the major issues with the court ruling, which is leading to the need to change the Mental Health Act, was around consent

and given that the judge ruled that the legislation only deals with patients' rights through the complaint process, to the Minister of Health: how have you provided for consent in advance of treatment in the proposed legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Bill 17, the amendments to the Mental Health Act, were – part of it was in contemplation of the J.H. decision. But generally, even without the J.H. decision, these are amendments that we agree with in principle as a government and want to be able to continue with regardless of what the outcome is of the Court of Appeal. We know that it's important to modernize, first of all, the hearings at the review panels but also to take further steps to be able to protect the rights of the patients that appear before them.

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister didn't answer my question about consent and given that the minister has repeatedly said that this legislation is about protecting patients' rights and given that the only provision of this legislation that will be enforced upon passage is in regard to allowing health practitioners, like nurse practitioners, to assess and treat patients and given that there are no provisions in Bill 17 to ensure that a patient or their nearest relative are to be made aware of their right to deny consent of any treatment, to the minister: how exactly does this legislation protect the rights of patients today?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we're doing with this bill is actually allowing a lot of family members who are caring for a loved one who might be suffering from a mental illness be able to have an understanding and be involved in what is happening with their loved one as they go through the process and making sure that patients have an opportunity as well to know what their legal rights are and access to counsel to be able to answer any questions that they might have as they go through the process, through the panel process or otherwise.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm asking specifically about patient consent.

Given that one of the reasons that admission certificates are often needed is due to serious mental health concerns and given that in these cases many individuals are not in the best place to make decisions around their own mental health and given that family members can legally make these decisions on behalf of the patient in the cases according to the act, why is there no provision in Bill 17 that a member of the family will be provided with the treatment plan, and why is there no provision that the patient or their decision-maker, when presented with the treatment plan, will be told of their right to oppose or appeal the treatment?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, these amendments to the Mental Health Act are to be able to expand the protection of the rights of the patients who go through the process and to be able to engage the family members more. We're very proud of being able to make those amendments to be able to provide for those changes to the process and as well, as I said in the previous answer, to be able to also allow the patients to understand what their legal rights are. That's why we're very proud of this legislation and the amendments to the Mental Health Act, so that we can take these

steps, make sure that the patients and their families are the focus of this legislation going forward for this government.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Meadows has a question.

Political Extremism and Racism in Alberta

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue recently conducted a study of right-wing extremism in Canada that says, quote, the number of white supremacist groups in Canada has tripled in the past five years, driven by the Internet and social media. The study found that Alberta is one of the places where right-wing extremism online is concentrated. These findings are very disturbing news. Has the Minister of Justice read this report, and what is he doing to confront this problem?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The collective goal of this Legislature should be about making sure that all people in this province feel valued and respected, a place where all people can fully participate and contribute to our province's future. I think that the D in NDP stands for "division," and obviously they're not interested in uniting this province together, making sure that at a time when we are mobilized to help out so many people in this province, we see people standing together, brothers and sisters side by side, making sure that we take care of our minorities at a time when they use division.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the study reports that neo-Nazi websites like Iron March and Fascist Forge have users based in Alberta and given that the report notes that other right-wing groups such as Three Percenters, Soldiers of Odin, Proud Boys now appear openly in public in Alberta, what is the Minister of Justice doing to address the growing confidence of right-wing extremists in Alberta?

Mrs. Aheer: I am very, very proud of our Minister of Justice for the incredible work that he's been doing with our ministry to make sure that racism is being addressed. As was mentioned in the motion and the work that is being done collaboratively amongst many of the ministries here, the Minister of Justice not only is taking a look at our Police Act and bringing that forward but is also going to be working with our minority groups across the province. One of the things that we've done, Mr. Speaker, is opened up this House to all of the people of Alberta. This is their House. We want people to feel safe and welcome here, and we're very excited about collaborating with them.

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, given that the Justice minister himself has refused to condemn racist and anti-Semitic comments from his own appointees and given the racist anti-Semitic comments made by the UCP government's own appointees and given those comments reflect the same language we hear from extreme right-wing groups like those studied in this report and given that his government has not been shy to condemn Albertans simply for their environmental views, why does the minister not apply the same analogy to confronting hateful prejudice from one of his own appointees?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker – and I say this to all Albertans – this government condemns all forms of racism, full stop. Shame on that member for the allegations in that question. This government

condemns all forms of racism. We will not be divided by the NDP. Enough is enough. We are here for all Albertans. All. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for [interjections] Order. Order. The hon. Minister of Justice and the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West will both come to order. You've had your opportunity to ask and answer questions.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Willow Square Continuing Care Centre in Fort McMurray

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Willow Square long-term care facility has been under construction since April 2018 and was on track to be completed by May of this year; however, the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating floods Fort McMurray experienced in April impacted construction completion and postponed the initial move-in date. To the Minister of Infrastructure: given that there is remediation work being done on Willow Square, can you tell us about the new timeline for our seniors to be able to move into this long-term care facility?

Mr. Panda: I'm committed to getting construction of the Willow Square continuing care centre finished as quickly as possible. The recent flood resulted in damage to the parkade level, the storage and parking areas. In fact, there was as much as six feet of water, but it did not reach the residential levels on the main floor and above. The prime contractor continues to work upstairs while the incidents contractor works downstairs. Once the assessment of the damage from the flood is completed, the schedule for opening of the facility will be updated.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's great news, Minister.

Given that Fort McMurray recently experienced the historic flooding and given that most of the lower townsite of Fort McMurray is located within a flood plain, including Willow Square long-term care facility, which sustained some damage, as you explained in your answer, to the Minister of Infrastructure: can you please share with this House what design considerations were included in the build to mitigate potential flood damage?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, risk mitigation was an important component that was incorporated into the design of the Willow Square continuing care centre, and some of those measures include: the main floor is built above the 1 in 100 year flood level to address flood risk, and the resident rooms and other critical building functions are located on the upper floors, above the expected levels of a 1 in 100 year flood, and parking is built below the main floor of the building.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that Willow Square will be a long-term care facility operated by Alberta Health Services and given that Alberta Health Services will ultimately determine the date when seniors can begin moving into the centre and given that this project has been a long time coming for our region and the seniors are very eager to move into this long-term care facility, to the Minister of Infrastructure: can you please explain what measures have been taken to speed up the commissioning from Infrastructure to Health?

2:40

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche for her advocacy on this file. We know that the residents of Fort McMurray have waited a long time for this project, and I want to reassure the residents that we will do what we can to get AHS officials commissioning the building as quickly as possible. Due to the flood, we had to replace some equipment like pumps, which had some lead time to resource. They are repaired. Be patient. You waited so long, but it will be soon.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will return to the remainder of the daily Routine.

Order. Order.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice of Government Motion 28 to be put on the Order Paper in my name as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) condemn the actions of public-sector unions who are blocking a proposed wage top-up for health care aides in continuing care facilities, and
- (b) express its gratitude to the hard-working health care aides who are helping to keep Alberta's most vulnerable people safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

Bill 28

Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 28, the Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, 2020.

Our government is committed to ensuring that families are safe, secure, and protected. If passed, this bill will prohibit convicted sex offenders from being able to legally change their names and hide in our communities, which will help to protect children and vulnerable Albertans.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 29

Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2020

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 29, the Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2020.

Local elections are the backbone of our democracy. The changes we are proposing will create a level playing field for candidates and more democratic local elections for voters and citizens.

We have consulted with Albertans, and through our consultations we have become aware of a number of gaps in the democratic process at the local level. Our proposed changes will close those gaps by doing the following: expanding campaign donations from a \$4,000 total limit to \$5,000 per donor per candidate across the

province, allowing candidates to raise \$5,000 outside of the campaign period; updating advertising rules to allow for more open discussions on policies and issues; ensuring that surplus funds are donated to charity and not carried over from election to election, and; moving the disclosure of donations until after elections are over.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 29 will make local elections stronger, fairer, and more democratic for all Albertans. With that, I move first reading of Bill 29.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a speech, that I referenced on Monday night in the debate on Bill 15, entitled The Separate School Question by D'Arcy McGee.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the daily Routine, and as such we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 15 Choice in Education Act, 2020

The Acting Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments offered with respect to this bill?

Member Irwin: Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask: are we currently on the amendment right now?

The Acting Chair: We are on the main bill. There are no amendments.

Member Irwin: Oh, we're on the main bill. Okay. Fantastic. That's okay. I'll speak to the main bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I've been honoured to rise and speak to Bill 15 a few times in the House already. You know, I've commented multiple times, as a proud former educator, somebody who worked in the education system for many years, just how proud I am of our public education system and how proud I am of the fact that 93 per cent of Albertans choose our public education system. I think that's something of which we should be quite proud.

Now, one of the concerns that – well, there are a few concerns that have been raised. I've shared countless times in this House, in fact, my reticence around the expansion of charter schools when we have such a strong system. I give the example of Edmonton public, in fact. Edmonton public has actually been studied globally, and they've been praised for the diversity of choice that they've been able to offer within their public system. It's interesting when, again, you see jurisdictions around the world that are very much praising Edmonton's system. I give the example of sports programming, indigenous programming, faith programming. Edmonton Christian schools are a great example. Those schools were historically private schools, and they were absorbed into Edmonton public, and it's been a really successful model.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I want to again put on the record my concerns about what we've seen. Again, I like to take – I know sometimes other folks in this House are fearful of an evidence-based approach, but I like to really ground myself in an evidence-based approach. Yeah. I can survey some of the research around the world on charter schools in particular and actually countless jurisdictions within the United States. You can see a pattern of when states – because, of course, education is sort of a very piecemeal operation right now in the States and governed at the state level, you've seen examples where, when those same states move towards more private and charter schools, there's a direct impact, negative impact on the public systems, and you see a drain of resources, both financial and human, from those public systems.

2:50

Again I want to be very clear. There are some incredible charter schools in the province of Alberta. They're doing great work. I've said that on record multiple times. I know that my colleagues and I have constituents who choose charter schools. We are not opposed to those charter schools that currently serve our province, absolutely not: Mother Earth's charter school is one example; Boyle Street Education Centre, Suzuki Charter School. In fact, I just heard from a parent – was it last night? Sorry; time is very tricky these days; I think it was last night – who'd seen me speaking about charter schools yesterday in the House. She said: "Thanks for speaking up. I choose to send my kids to a charter school." I think she said that she has two daughters, one who's very artistic. She said: "I choose to send my daughter to those schools. Absolutely, that's my choice. I know you support that."

She said that she's worried, though, about what we see in Bill 15. I know that I spoke to this at length the other day. I don't have the bill in front of me, but if memory serves me correctly, under section 8 of Bill 15 the first part talks about pedagogy and basically the intent of charter schools. Again I'm summarizing. It's that they offer a distinct pedagogical approach, something along those lines. The second piece says, "vocation-based education." I raised the concern, to which the Premier answered yesterday, about: why the need for vocation-based education charter schools at the elementary level? To which he responded, noting that I was degrading the trades or something to that effect.

Absolutely not, because had he listened to what I'd said prior, I talked very much about how proud I am of Alberta Education's course offerings that support the trades. You might say: well, why is that member promoting the government's programs? I was part of Alberta Education. I was the executive director of high school curriculum. In that role I was so proud of how we were supporting careers education. In fact, I was working in Alberta Education, in the ministry, under consecutive PC governments as well and was proud of the work that we were doing to advance careers education: dual credit, CTS, CTF, green certificate, work experience. I could go on at length about how powerful these programs are, and they're offered all across the province.

I noted the other day, you know, that when I teaching in Bawlf, Alberta, certainly kids didn't have the same array of programming that they would have gotten, say, down the road in the big city of Camrose, but we tried hard to adapt those programs. For instance, with green certificate – if you don't know about green certificate, it's an incredible agricultural program. Kids get a certificate. They get credits in a number of different fields. There's, like, crop science. There's calving. I think they call it, yeah, cows and calving, something like that. I'm getting the course term wrong. I did grow up in rural Alberta, so I do know a little bit about it, but I just don't

want to get the course title wrong. There's an equine one, working with horses. The list goes on. There's a pork – maybe they call it hog production. It doesn't matter: if anyone has questions, I'll get you all the names. The point being that this is an expansive realm of course offerings, and even though clearly I'm not working for Alberta Education anymore, I love to promote those programs.

My point in telling you all of this, to connect it back to Bill 15, is the fact that we offer already – and this was my point to the Premier yesterday – an extensive range of career programming, vocation-based education, if you will, particularly at the secondary level, most offerings of which are, of course, at the 10 to 12 level. I asked the Premier: why is there a need to expand that, as the bill is currently written, to the K to 6 level? Research shows across the world – in fact, you can look at research here in Alberta as well. It would point to the fact that streaming of kids at a young age is detrimental. If we're focusing on careers at a very young age, those students can then be pigeonholed into a track of programming that could very much change.

I know that when I posted about this on social media the other day, I had countless responses from parents and from teachers and from even students, who said, like – you know, I remember one parent said something like: my five-year-old wants to be a unicorn. That career path might change for her in a few years.

Ms Phillips: My nine-year-old wants to be a police farmer.

Member Irwin: Your nine-year-old wants to be what?

Ms Phillips: A police farmer.

Member Irwin: A police farmer. I don't even know what that is.

But your nine-year-old, to the Member for Lethbridge-West, is a great example of a nine-year-old who would be, you know, in that K to 6 grade level. That member's son has his whole life ahead of him, right? I don't want to put words in that member's mouth, but I would bet that she would argue that she wants him to be exposed to a range of opportunities . . .

Ms Phillips: Police farming.

Member Irwin: . . . beyond police farming. Sorry, *Hansard*. I don't know what police farming means, but I'll get an explanation of that later.

The point being that she and other parents that I'm hearing from know that their job and the job of teachers is to encourage creativity and diverse experiences at that K to 6 level, not to push them into jobs, right?

These are some of my concerns, and again I wanted to get that on the record because I didn't really get an opportunity to clarify with the Premier yesterday what I meant in expressing my concerns. I certainly – and no one on this side of the House is critical of trades education. This is not a debate about trades education versus university education, absolutely not. We know very well the benefit of either route. Again, I saw first-hand when I was working with students as a teacher how powerful those career programming offerings were for them. Kids who I know, because of some of the experiences that they were exposed to in high school, went on to have awesome careers in the trades.

With that, I will sit down and end my remarks on Bill 15.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Chair, and I thank the previous member for her comments as well on this very important

piece of legislation. It is an honour to rise in this House to speak to the Choice in Education Act, 2020. Like so many people in this House on both sides of the aisle, I am extremely passionate about education and about this bill.

In my time speaking today, I hope to cover, broadly speaking, why I so strongly support this bill – it is a great bill, and I'm excited for it – and also the journey of how we got here politically speaking, both myself and just overall in Alberta. As well, I'm enthusiastic about the charter- and vocational-focused elements in this bill – I want to speak to that – and then how this bill also ensures that education is financially sound. The opposition has put forward the idea that they're concerned that it will cause fiscal constraints or a zero-sum game of the public versus other models of education. We disagree, I disagree on that, and I want to point out why. Then if I have time, I want to speak about beautiful school choice in my riding of Sherwood Park and how I think Bill 15 will strengthen that great model in Sherwood Park.

To begin, Mr. Chair, I am so happy to support this bill fundamentally because I believe in school choice and parental rights, as I know so many do in this House. I want to read the preamble, which is included in the Choice in Education Act, section 2(a): “Whereas parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that may be provided to their children.” There's nothing more important than the relationship between a parent and their child, especially the format of education where the child gets to realize their God-given potential.

Then I'm also excited for subsection (b) of section 2:

Whereas the Government of Alberta recognizes public schools, separate schools, Francophone schools, private schools, charter schools, early childhood services programs and home education programs as being valued and integral in providing choice in education to students and parents.

Mr. Chair, who could be against all that choice? That is absolutely a wonderful and beautiful multiplicity of choice. I'm so passionate about this.

Bill 15 honours our commitment to Albertans to introduce a choice in education act. This is another promise made, promise kept by our government. The Choice in Education Act affirms that parents, not politicians, not bureaucrats, but parents have the right to choose the kind of education they feel is best for their children.

3:00

Mr. Chair, I have to be quite frank because we always must be in this House. I'm shocked we even have to have this philosophical debate at the core of this legislation in 2020. But you know what? Here we are. That's a great segue to: how did we get here, including myself? This has a lot to do with me being here in this House. This is the top reason why I ran for office, why I got motivated and got off the couch. I'd never been involved in politics before, but I was quite concerned, as were the constituents of Sherwood Park, about the path the former government was taking with education. Parents would come to me again and again in the community concerned about the former government's top-down approach to education, a big-government, one-size-fits-all approach, the pedagogy coming out of ivory towers in downtown Edmonton rather than from communities and being led by parents in the local areas.

Parents were really fired up in Sherwood Park about this, Mr. Chair, and fundamentally I think the former government should reflect on why they were a one-and-done government for the first time in Alberta's history. It was because they got the Education file so wrong. I talked to so many people in Sherwood Park who were, like most people, not very political, not like us political people here in the Legislature. They said: “You know what? They just got that wrong. They infringed on my parental rights, and I thought they

were weakening, not strengthening, school choice.” An incredible victory, historic for the Conservative government, with over 1.8 million people, including so many parental-rights and school-choice people, supported our government’s vision, which is reflected in Bill 15, to enshrine and ensure and strengthen school choice and parental rights in education.

What I would say, too, is that Albertans at this point, especially with the politicization of the education debate, unfortunately, Mr. Chair, are tired of so-called experts preaching to them about what education is best for their children. Now, to be clear, we know the intentions of everyone here in the House are good, and we do have a lot of people who are quite learned and passionate about education. But I daresay that the ultimate experts in education are parents, not the people with PhDs. They certainly have a place in the debate, but it’s for parents to decide what education is best for their children.

Mr. Yao: Hear, hear.

Mr. Walker: Thank you.

Moving on to the charter school element, which I’m so excited about, Mr. Chair, this is going to revolutionize and transform Alberta education for the better to ensure gainful employment for our youth, which is so critical, especially in the challenging economic times we’re currently facing. This bill, speaking to charter and vocation-based education, will reduce red tape for the creation of new charter schools, including vocation-focused charter schools. We are paving the way to completely revolutionize and reinvent vocational schools because we believe in Alberta that practical, experiential learning is as valuable as academic learning, and I say that as someone who’s totally artsy. I’ve got two degrees in the liberal arts, but I really respect the experiential and practical learning, and we need that for our 21st-century economy as we restore the Alberta advantage. Most critically, focusing on vocation- and charter-based schools will help youth transition from learning into the workforce and having gainful employment.

Before the economic downturn of 2014, Mr. Chair, Alberta was number one for youth employment in Canada. We certainly do lead in Canada in our trades education system, but we need to get better. The world is very competitive and, again, we’re facing incredible economic headwinds. As someone who loves world politics and international relations, I’ve always been intrigued by the success of the German vocational system, practised and implemented both in Germany, Austria, and the Swiss canton states that are of the German persuasion. In Europe they have the best youth employment rates, too. There’s a strong correlation between a strong vocational system, streamed and part of the overall academic system, and youth employment. This is a social justice issue, for sure. So I’m really excited that this bill will add that and greatly strengthen youth employment opportunities and overall our education system.

Now, again, I would say that this bill clearly strengthens school choice and program choice. It does not undermine it. We have had a great, fierce debate, and I really deeply appreciate the opposition’s passion. In a lot of cases they have very great experience in this area, so this has been a wonderful debate, but I would say this, Mr. Chair. The left always preaches diversity and choice in so many areas. There’s great nobility to those intentions, and, you know, to a certain extent I can really appreciate that. But when it comes to education, oddly, to school choice, they’re all about one size fits all and that government knows best. It is quite shocking. I know the members on the government side would agree with me. So I would ask them to reflect on that important point. You proudly and quite rightly in many cases champion diversity in so many areas, but I

just don’t hear that championing when it comes to school choice. Maybe I misunderstand it, and I look forward to the continuing of the debate.

Then I also want to point out that this bill financially strengthens the education system. I know there have been concerns on the opposition side, and it’s certainly their job to be skeptical and ask questions, but I believe this bill actually financially strengthens our education system. Let me tell you why, Mr. Chair, and to all members of this vaunted House. This bill does not come with any funding changes. Bill 15 does not. We fund charter schools to 100 per cent funding, similar to our public school dollars, and the dollars will continue to follow the students. Everyone will be looked after. There’s no need to scaremonger. I look at the Member for Red Deer-South. He knows what I’m talking about. I think that was a wink. Thank you.

Furthermore, the costs of supporting a child in independent schools and home-schooling – we actually have a very strong home-schooling tradition in Sherwood Park, which is quite remarkable – are substantially lower than in a fully funded public school, and charters also, frankly, operate more efficiently on a per pupil basis. These are just facts. They ain’t even alternative facts. These are just real facts, capital F.

Also, Mr. Chair, continuing on this angle of how this bill financially strengthens the system, independent schools, for example, still only receive 70 per cent funding, and they do not receive any capital funding. Holy smokes. This is clearly a case, as the facts have been laid out, that this Bill 15 will make our overall education financially stronger, and there needs to be no more false information that independent, charter, and home-schools will, quote, cost us more money. The facts are here. We will all have the benefit of the Blues. So there you go.

In my remaining time I want to talk about my wonderful experience in Sherwood Park and Strathcona county, experiencing the wonderful school choice we have.

Again, I’m so passionate about this bill and congratulate the Minister of Education and our whole government team for putting this together and also the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon. He’s been so passionate about this, a long-time educator. It’s been wonderful to have conversations with him, too, Mr. Chair, on this very important bill.

3:10

In Sherwood Park we have various school models that, I think, are reflective of what we want to do with this bill and what we have in Alberta for amazing school choice. We have a public system, a separate system, a francophone system, a charter system – and I have a really important fact to point out about this, and I’m so proud it’ll be in *Hansard* – and then also we have alternative programs, including alternative Christian, and as I mentioned previously, Mr. Chair, we have home-schooling.

First of all, I have been absolutely blown away, and it’s been a treat to work with Elk Island public schools to learn about the amazing diversity of programs we have in our public system. I’ve been able to tour junior highs, and I toured Bev Facey community high school as well as Sal. I thank the chair of Elk Island public schools, Trina Boymook, for taking me on those tours and for her care and concern and passion for education. You know, everyone in the House who is very passionate about public education – and we all are. The opposition has shown great passion and thoughtful comments on that system as well. I can tell you that I’ve been absolutely amazed at the programming, the diversity of programming, academic or otherwise, that is found in the public system, be it public, separate, or francophone.

In our Catholic high school, Archbishop Jordan, we have a national-leading robotics program. That's just one example, Mr. Chair, of the great diversity and programming breadth and depth that's offered in our public system, but that doesn't mean that's at the expense of the charters or the independent schools or what have you or vice versa. This all can work together and actually complement one another, and I think the proof on that point is in the pudding.

I've been really fortunate. I was also able to tour and build great relations with our francophone school, École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif. I hope I did that okay as an anglophone. I speak a little bit of Japanese but no French. They're a K through 6 school, and they've been there since 2015, opened up under the former government, and they've been exploding in growth. Just wonderful people, a great school, and I'm so thankful that we can offer education instruction in both official languages of our nation. This beautiful K through 6 francophone school is a great manifestation of that.

Also, on the same grounds as our francophone school we have New Horizons. Now, this one I'm really stoked to talk about here in my comments, Mr. Chair. New Horizons is the first charter school in Alberta ever and, I believe, also in Canada. Maybe someone can confirm that, but I also think in Canada. Established in 1995, it started the charter movement here in Alberta, and I must say that 25 years later it's somewhat troubling that we seem to be hearing from the same forces that would oppose charter schools still opposing them a generation later, when the proof is in the pudding. The school choice model works. These charters work beautifully.

I'm so happy that we're strengthening the charters with this bill. I've spoken to the people who originally established New Horizons in Sherwood Park in the early '90s, and they told me as recently as six, seven months ago that it was nothing but a fight from big union education folks, people of a left-wing viewpoint on education, nothing but a constant fight and a struggle. While I hear, you know, lots of sincere comments from the opposition on Bill 15, I think unfortunately we're repeating history here, and some people just don't learn from it. It seems we're still fighting these battles. But I know our government is strongly behind school choice, and we believe in charters. I strongly believe in charters.

I also strongly believe in alternative programs within the school system, including faith-based schools. I want to take a moment to tell you about the wonderful Strathcona Christian Academy in Sherwood Park, which has been in existence, I would say, Mr. Chair, from about 1980. It moved into the public system in 1998. They offer wonderful programming while instilling their faith values in the curriculum, which I think we all support. I don't think that is too controversial. I think the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon would agree with me. They started off as a private independent, and then 18 years later they transitioned in 1998 to the public system, and they're overall very satisfied. Actually, I just attended the SCA graduation yesterday. It was totally COVID-19 proper regulations. No one needs to notify Dr. Hinshaw; everything was correct, and we followed the guidelines. It was just wonderful to see all those kids graduate, and their parents were so happy not only that their children were getting a great education through school choice and parental rights in this particular alternative model but that their values could be reflected in the school curriculum. I think that's important. We strongly support faith-based schools. It's one of the biggest reasons I am here, and I'm here to strongly support this bill.

I've also got to know the home-schooling community in Strathcona county as well as across Alberta, and they're just all absolutely stoked about this bill as well. They feel that the former government, again, was probably just ideologically opposed to

home-schooling, and they felt there was a frosty relationship. So they're thankful that they now have a government who strongly believes that there's no more sacred relationship than between that of the parent and the child. On education the state can't intervene there. It is not for so-called experts to say what is the best education for the child. It is for the parent. We can best realize a child's God-given potential through a multiplicity of choice in the education system.

To wrap up, Mr. Chair, I have seen school choice, as I've laid out here, work in my community of Sherwood Park. All these models don't take away from each other. It is not a zero-sum, dog-eat-dog world. They strengthen each other. They give Albertans various formats and platforms for their children to realize their potential. Again, just to wrap up, I am so honoured and thankful. I've been waiting for a long time to see this bill to fruition. I've knocked on so many doors, talked to so many people, put up with a lot of drama, as you have to, to get here. I think we can all reflect and agree with that. I just want to be on record to say how strongly I support the Choice in Education Act, 2020. It is a great honour.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has risen to speak.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 15, Choice in Education Act, 2020, as put forward by the Minister of Education, today at the Committee of the Whole stage. I do not believe I have spoken to this bill yet. It's my first opportunity.

The first thing that I would like to point out at this committee stage: I think that the foundational approach for this, for how we should structure our thinking about this bill, is that what Alberta parents want and I think what grandparents want and I think what people with no children want is to have an education system that has a modern curriculum, no barriers to learning, that fully supports every child to reach their full potential. I think that's what educators want as well. Even people who have gone their whole lives without having children or even spending much time thinking about children see the value of that because they know that those children one day will be building the world that we live in and taking care of us as we age. Our investment in the education system is indeed what sets the foundation for that.

While I do have a certain perspective as a parent of children in the school system right now – and I think that perspective is really important – I think back to how I thought about public education before I had kids. To be quite honest, I don't know if it has changed all that much because I have always wanted to live in a society where we are nurturing every child through to young adulthood and preparing them for an increasingly complex world that we all live in. I want every person to be able to find their way in that world. Find their way: this might sound like a little bit of lowered expectations, but those of us with the benefit of adulthood think that, you know, sometimes finding our way is about the best thing you can hope for as we all muddle our way through. Finding our way in the world means feeling like a whole individual, finding work that sustains us, understanding the full exercise of our human rights, and being able to balance that world of work with the world of hobbies and family and friends and our contribution to our communities. That's what I want out of my education system, and that's the lens through which I see anyone's interventions in this particular space of public policy.

3:20

With that, you know, this Choice in Education Act: does it do that? In my view, a public education system that is as broadly

conceived as possible is, in fact, a great leveler so that kids like me who grew up in relatively – I mean, at that time it was more rural than it is now. The Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain will assure us all that it's a bustling metropolis. Not when I was a kid. Certainly, Campsite Road was pretty farm-ish at that time. But a kid like me can go through the public system and learn French and then learn German and go on to postsecondary with the benefit of a whole lot of student loans – it was the 1990s – and get a decent public education. My parents couldn't have paid for any of those things. They couldn't have paid for some of the international experiences even that we had at that time.

You know, we do see in the United States that some of those experiences, whether it's outdoor education, whether it's a multilingual education, are only accessible to people who have money. In my view, that ability to go on and have the broadest possible opportunities in front of you is when we have a public education system that allows you to find those opportunities and allows your parents to help you find them and has those choices available to you without having to pay for it, quite frankly, so that working-class kids can become different from what their parents and grandparents expected from their own lives and we can see constant improvement. Education is then, in fact, that great leveler. People can succeed, you know, to sort of paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr., based on "the content of their character," not any other attribute: class, race, religion, national or ethnic origin background.

With that, when you bring in a piece of legislation that seems, at least on the face of it, to be wanting to introduce more of that privatization element, more of that paying for education element, tilting some of the access to particular kinds of education – for example, what has happened to program unit funding for kindergarten students – when you see moves to introduce some of that into our province, that forms the basis of my concerns with this piece of legislation.

My own children attend a francophone school, which is a product of choice within the public system, and it's a choice that I was very pleased to be able to make for my kids. It meant that their kindergarten classes were pretty small. It meant that they have access to a school community in that sort of K to 12 way that also has a community life built around it. All schools do. I don't want to take away from the other community-building efforts that school administrations and teachers and staff build for kids in elementary school. But in the francophone system in a community like Lethbridge you find that there are then francophone cultural celebrations and other pieces that go alongside school life and feed into school life. We as a family deliberately chose that because we believe very strongly that we're Canadians first, which is a conversation that has been germane these days. We are very proud Canadians. We also believe – well, we don't believe. We acknowledge the fact that Canada is a bilingual country and we're setting our kids up for success when we acknowledge that and ensure that they have that kind of education in both official languages.

In my view, we are taking the right steps when we are making sure that multilingual and multicultural approaches within public education are there for students. There have been a number of attempts, for example, at expanding Arabic language programming in the Lethbridge public school division. For example, the Palliser school division, which is right next door – a lot of the administrators live in Lethbridge – also administers, for example, the Islamic school in Calgary through various ins and outs in bringing faith-based education into the public system. That was an outcome that happened a few years ago.

I think that what has been proven over the last – oh, I don't know – at least decade is that we've seen that the public system can

accommodate a number of different choices; for example: charter schools, which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood talked about and I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has likely talked about as well; multilingual approaches either within the public system, Catholic, or francophone. Parents can find their way to the kind of education that they want for their kids without having to write exorbitant cheques.

Indeed, you know, from the government's own survey it appears that the majority of Albertans agree with that perspective. It's certainly my perspective. Apparently, according to the survey, which is, of course, a self-selected group of folks that took that survey, across the province about 62 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the choices available in education. In my view, that's a signal to the government to expand the types of choices in public education that don't require putting down a credit card before you pick up a textbook.

You know, it is on that basis, then, Mr. Chair, that I would like to move an amendment, if I could, to this piece of legislation. I'd like to move it on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. It is on the topic of establishing charter – no, not Gold Bar. Sorry. Glenora. It was a "g". Come on. Oh, you Edmonton folks are all the same. Am I right?

So I have an amendment here. The original is here, and I have the copies as well. I wouldn't mind keeping one of those copies, if I might, sir, for my eventual fate of having to read it into the record. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. Just to remind everybody that if you would like a copy of the amendment delivered to you, please put up your hand. Otherwise, there will be copies at the tables to the left and right of me.

If the hon. member could please continue her comments, and if you could also read the amendment into the record. For the benefit of everybody here, this will be amendment A7.

Ms Phillips: Okay. Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. How much time do I have?

The Deputy Chair: At this juncture, about nine minutes, 50 seconds.

Ms Phillips: Why don't I start with reading it into the record? Then we'll see how it goes.

The Deputy Chair: Perfect.

Ms Phillips: All right. We have amendment A7 here, Mr. Chair, that Bill 15, Choice in Education Act, 2020, be amended by striking out section 7 and substituting the following:

7 Section 24 is repealed and the following is substituted:

Application to establish charter school

24(1) A person may apply to the Minister for the establishment of a charter school to be operated by a society incorporated under the Societies Act or by a company registered under Part 9 of the Companies Act, other than

- (a) a person who is responsible for the operation of an accredited private school under section 29, or
- (b) a person who was responsible for the operation of an accredited private school under section 29 at any time in the last 5 years.

(2) On receipt of an application under subsection (1), the Minister shall, in accordance with the regulations, provide notice of the application for a new charter school and the proposed programming to

- (a) every board of a public or separate school division and Francophone regional authority operating within the

geographic area in which the charter school is to be established, and

(b) the operators of any other charter schools as determined by the Minister.

(3) An application must be in the form and contain the information prescribed by the regulations.

With that, I will move this amendment, Mr. Chair, and provide my colleagues the opportunity to speak to it. Thank you.

3:30

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Nally: Mr. Chair, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 24 COVID-19 Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. members. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill at this time? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 24, COVID-19 Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. It looks like this particular piece of legislation amends 15 different acts over seven ministries and certainly is in response to the pandemic. I think some clarification or some changes do need to be made following the end of the public health order. You know, I do understand that this is an omnibus bill, so there are a lot of pieces. I think that just given my experience with this government's practices with these kinds of bills, I'm somewhat worried that I haven't seen everything, but I will do my best to go through it.

I think one of the pieces that I was really concerned about was the changes to the financial reporting. We've mentioned this a number of times, but I think it's really important to put on the record and just take a little trip backwards to when things were sort of unfolding as the pandemic – I think we were all starting to realize just the enormity of what was happening. I'm sure there were discussions going on all over the place about how to continue, how to do things, you know: how would we continue to represent our constituents and do the work that we were sent here to do?

What was happening around that time was that we were in budget estimates. Now, I don't recall specifically how many ministries had an opportunity to go through that experience. I think it was probably only a day or two worth of ministries. I know that I did participate in six hours of budget estimates, and I think that was on the first day. It got cut off pretty soon after that.

For people that don't understand, for the many people that are tuned in, riveted to Alberta Assembly TV, you know, I'd just like to explain that the process of budget estimates is really important. I'm talking about this because I want to underline some of the structures that are in place that maybe you could default on if things were going to happen like are being proposed in Bill 24. Budget estimates is a process where the ministries are sort of pulled apart, as you will, and then the different ministers and their officials as well as their political staff and the opposition and their staff enter into a process where they each have hours to ask questions. That goes for both sides, government and opposition. What that allows us to do, I guess a little bit like Public Accounts, for those of you that have participated in Public Accounts, is ask very specific questions that you normally wouldn't get a chance to ask. You certainly likely wouldn't get that level of detail in question period or during debate, but in this process it does allow you to dive in a little bit and ask questions. That was cut off.

Now, understandably, there was a growing – well, it was a pandemic. Things were escalating very quickly and changing very quickly. I understand that the government decided that that was going to stop, and then they were going to jam through a budget. My problem with that, Mr. Chair, is that at the time I think there had to be – there are smart people on the government side and their officials – a keen awareness of what was happening, that this was a global pandemic. We had seen it happen in other places around the world, and we saw subsequently what happened to economies around the world. We had seen sort of this fallout of problems and destruction based on what was happening in terms of health, so there were things to fall back on.

In fact, I do recall the Premier saying during one of his pressers – I don't know the date of it. This was early on when, you know, the public's attention was very much focused on hospital space and equipment, things like ventilators. This was before we all started learning what PPE meant. We were focused on that medical equipment. At the time the Premier said – I don't recall the context – that Alberta Health Services or himself or himself as government had actually ordered additional ventilators in January.

I was struck by that comment, given the timing. Clearly, the government or Alberta Health Services were aware of what was happening, and that's great. I'm completely happy that the government was watching what was happening all over the world, that they were aware of what was going on. That sort of led me to believe that if there was an awareness of what was coming, why is it that the budget reflected the numbers that it did, knowing what was coming, and why is it that we didn't prepare for this ahead of time?

Now as a result we have an omnibus piece of legislation, which is Bill 24, that does take care of a number of really important things – I will absolutely give the government that – but it messes around with financial reporting. I think that, like anything, I don't imagine that any Albertan is looking forward to getting that financial reporting. I think that we all understand the challenges ahead of us, not just in terms of our health and the pandemic and what has happened as a result but also our economy for other reasons and our resources and the difficulty that we're having there, the prices. I mean, there are just so many things, sort of all of these issues. I have to believe that the government and the officials knew that this was coming. There are some pretty smart people there.

Once again, you know, the question is: why is it that, again, knowing what they know, the government is giving themselves cover not to do one of the most important things that they were sent here to do, which is to be honest with Albertans in a timely fashion? We didn't get a whole lot of debate for the budget that, let's be honest, more than missed the mark, but now we're also not sticking to a timeline that I think we should do our best to stick to even if it's off a little bit. I mean, clearly, the government doesn't have a problem with being off a little bit because they were off quite a bit in the budget that they tabled. It is unfortunate that this is happening.

I believe that, you know, we need to be straight up with Albertans, let them know the position, however difficult it is, however much there may be pieces that we don't know yet. That is fine. There doesn't seem to be a problem pulling this stuff out and doing these things when it suits the government. My question is: why are we doing that?

3:40

Some of the other things. Again, just to underline, I don't believe that delaying the government's annual report to August is acceptable. You know, maybe the cynical part of me wants to believe that this will happen in the heat of summer when this place

is no longer sitting – I mean, I don't know for sure if we will be or not – and we won't be here. People won't be focused on this, so the cynical part of me is worried that that's why this is being done. I certainly hope that's not the case, but we'll see. You know, it sort of goes to the pattern, right?

Anyway, I'm going to continue with this. I'm also concerned there were a number of things in here, and it was about the safety codes or the safety standards. I do understand that there are likely things in terms of licensing in the safety codes, safety standards that very much apply to licensing. I certainly do understand that work environments or work schedules have been impacted quite a bit by what's going on right now, but I do worry about the broad powers given to the minister with respect to the Safety Codes Act.

I can give you an example. Let me pick an area where I am familiar with the safety codes. As many of you will know, there are a number of supports for people, whether they're seniors or people that require additional medical assistance or support for other disabilities. That might be supportive living accommodations. That might be lodges, nursing homes. That might be group homes, as people call them, for four or more people. In some cases that might even be day homes. That would certainly be – sorry; somebody's crawling over here. That might even be – I've lost my train of thought. It's not often you see your colleague go by like that.

My concern is actually about just the room to move that this piece of legislation gives the minister responsible for the safety codes. It would be lovely if the minister or somebody at some point could stand up and talk about why that was included, you know, just an example of why this inclusion makes sense so we can understand why that is and what problems this is looking to solve, in some cases prevent. Fair enough. My concern is that when you start to mess around with these codes as it relates to care for people, it sometimes impacts the frequency of inspections and, more importantly, the reporting of inspections. I would just like some reassurance from the minister responsible that that will not happen.

Again, I just want to say that I do understand that there's a reason. You know, I didn't understand the reason or the motivation for a lot of the other omnibus bills, but we won't talk about that anymore. We'll talk about this omnibus bill. I do appreciate that there are some reasons to address a number of different pieces over seven ministries, 15 different acts, and I do understand that that's because of the pandemic. But it would be good if the government would provide more clarity. All that's required is to say: "Here's why we did this. Here's a good example of this." We aren't party to a lot of briefings anymore for whatever reason, so we can't ask questions that would likely alleviate some of these uncomfortable questions in this place, but it would be great if somebody would actually answer some questions.

I mean, I understand why – oh, here I am looking at the Constitutional Referendum Act; wrong one. If someone could explain to me in Bill 24 – like, I understand why power of attorney might need to be changed. I totally get that. I understand why the Personal Directives Act might need to be altered a little bit, given the new situation. I totally get that. I totally understand it. That one's not hard. But I would like to know: why the Private Vocational Training Act? I would like to know: what was the motivation for that? Perhaps government could explain to us why that couldn't wait for a more thorough debate on its own, in isolation, as opposed to lumping it in, you know, and calling it a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, it would be really easy to clear this up if members from the government side would actually share some of their answers with us. That might help us vote in favour, or not, or to consider an amendment. We'd certainly appreciate that.

One of the other questions that I had is around child care. A lot of us have children. They're older or younger. I think that we can appreciate even just hearing stories from our constituents. I mean, we can all appreciate how incredibly vital child care is, access to child care. Access to affordable child care is vitally important, so I would like to know how reducing the licensing standards or measures to keep bad actors, as we call them, sort of screened out helps with the child care crisis that we're seeing unfold right in front of us. I think we're seeing it unfold because we just immediately went to this phase where suddenly everybody needed child care because their children weren't going to school but they didn't have access to the normal child care providers that they had previously. So it was this very concentrated amount of time where everybody was sort of faced with these huge problems.

But it seems kind of strange to me that this would be the time, while we're focused on a pandemic, that we're going to start reducing things that provide oversight. Now, I know no government likes to call a lot of oversight "red tape," which it is not. It's oversight. I'll give you an example. Let's say day homes, for example. Let's pick day homes. Now, this may have changed, but the last time that I was involved with any day homes or knew of any day home operators, I think it was six children, which included the biological children of the provider. I'm not a hundred per cent sure on that. But there were certain standards that had to be met. So literally there was an inspection, whether it was a fire inspection, a health inspection, and then there were recommendations that were put out. Certainly, we can talk about accreditation, which this government has sort of gone to town on. But I'm talking about safety. I don't understand why things like that, which are vital – government might look at it as red tape; I actually think it's vital, particularly in smaller settings like day homes. I do think it's vital that there is I don't want to say quality control but more about safety.

Although we've said this many times, the vast majority of providers – the vast majority – whether it's a day home operator, a child care facility operator, whatever it is, are amazing. They're outstanding. They go over and above what the requirements are on a regular basis. But there are some that do not, and that's what these things are in place for, to make sure that nobody is harmed in any way, deliberately or not. That is my concern. So it would be really great if that minister would stand up and speak to this: why that particular piece, looking at child care, is included in Bill 24. Again, some of the pieces in here are quite easy to understand and, yeah, make sense.

I'm going to actually go back to one of the issues under Health. It seems to provide explicit authorization and information sharing between Health, the office of the Chief Medical Examiner, which totally makes sense, and the Fatality Review Board with respect to accessing records of individuals who had or were suspected to have had COVID-19. Totally makes sense. You know, maybe some more information about what are the time limits of this and what we can expect because I think we're all hoping for the day that, whether there's a vaccine or whatever it is, we are no longer looking at life through this lens. But I would like to know how things will go back, when will they change back.

3:50

This piece of legislation also gives the minister powers and sets requirements for airports, long-term care facilities, homeless shelters with respect to addressing COVID-19 and COVID-19 quarantine, which, you know, on the surface totally makes sense. Without the public health orders or ending the state of emergency, I suppose that there are some things that need to be in place to allow the government to move quickly to address some concerns. I

certainly do understand that. But I think, given the nature of not so much airports here but of the people that use these facilities that we're talking about, it would be great to get more information.

As you can see, a lot of my questions really are just for clarity. I think for government to be able to say in no uncertain terms that all 15 acts that were amended in this piece of legislation were needed, were essential, had to happen – just give us some clarity. For whatever minister is responsible to stand up and say, "Here's what we did; here's why we did it, here's what we think it's going to correct, and here's what we think it's going to prevent," it's really easy. I know that the government doesn't act like it likes to be asked questions very often or doesn't like to be criticized for things maybe that it thinks should be done differently. I would suggest that nobody is perfect and nobody has all the answers. Perhaps it would serve them well to actually just try to answer the questions so we can all agree that we need to do this, we're good, let's vote, and let's move on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those are my comments. I will sit down.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Minister of Children's Services has risen to speak.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I actually want to thank the member opposite for a number of her questions and for the opportunity to talk a little bit about, really, particularly the impact that COVID-19 had on child care in our province but also across the country. You know, if we go back to the middle of March, when the chief medical officer of health first made the recommendation to close child care centres, I think that was where we really realized how important it was – we already knew how important child care is for working parents across our province, across our country, and that really emphasized that at a time when especially those parents working in front-line or essential service roles really were thrust into a situation where they desperately needed to access care. We worked with the chief medical officer of health to make sure that we could open centres in places, specifically starting in a three-kilometre radius of major health centres or hospitals so that we could get some of those centres up and running and support the needs of those parents.

We did have to put some very strict guidelines in place around cohorts and protocols and things like taking temperatures and filling out questionnaires for parents, limiting the number of people coming in and out of a centre, limiting parents to dropping children off at the doorway, and then making sure that cohorts of kids and educators were kept somewhat separate from each other just to limit the spread so that if there was a case – and we are very, very lucky. I think thus far, since the beginning of COVID, only three cases in all child care centres across the province were confirmed. I think that speaks to a couple of things. One is that they're exceptionally well educated and responsible, and they take the safety and well-being of Alberta children so, so seriously. That's something that gives parents a lot of confidence in the child care system we have, and it does speak to the high-quality education standards that we have. We're going to continue to move forward and maintain those because we have to. No matter what, we are committed to high-quality, accessible, and affordable child care for those who need it in the province of Alberta.

As we move through that, I mean – and I should clarify. Those cases that were identified for COVID, they were related to external sources, so there wasn't any spread happening within the systems. That is excellent. We are so very, very proud of our operators and our front-line early childhood educators across our province for that.

I do want to address your specific questions because when we're looking at what was put in place through the ministerial order that is part of this bill, largely related to COVID response, it really was to meet the needs of parents in a way that still ensured the safety and high-quality programming that we already have. An example of that was something like mixed-age ratios. Because of the closure of in-person classes in schools, sometimes if you were a child care centre, you could have a licence to serve children age zero to six. You could have one for out-of-school care. What we wanted was that if a front-line worker was looking for child care, and say that they had one child that was two and one that was seven, we didn't want to add an additional barrier, so we wanted to make sure that there was flexibility in those mixed-age ratios, which is important not only at a time of a pandemic but just generally. It's something that we actually hear a lot from parents across the province, specifically in rural or northern communities.

Sometimes those age ratios make it really difficult for them to find enough high-quality staff to serve the needs of parents and families. In fact, through our consultations – those are being led by the MLA for Grande Prairie, and I want to say that overwhelmingly thus far for a lot of the responses centres want to keep a lot of the changes that we've made through these processes just for flexibility. One of the questions I asked, which I think would be interesting information for you as well based on your line of questioning, is that if we're going to provide an exemption around what's already in the current regulations, my first question is: okay; child care is one of the top things that was raised for Children's Services through the red tape reduction portal. One of those things that came up over and over and over again was ratios, so I asked the question of the ministry: if we're going to provide exemptions regularly anyway, what does that look like in a year? I believe that last year 794 programs – I don't think that was an average – asked for exemptions, and there were 1,293 exemptions granted. This is just typical, ongoing for a variety of reasons. Oftentimes it is a mixed-age ratio or making sure that they can adhere to the staffing ratios that are needed.

You did mention accreditation. I mean, that's something that through the calls that we've had thus far is actually hugely supported, that over time it had become somewhat subjective. It was a lot of paperwork, but they didn't feel that that level of red tape or paperwork was necessary for quality. It's something that we do want to enshrine in our legislation, but it's something that's really maintained by making sure that we have a highly educated workforce.

Back to the specific COVID changes, you mentioned day homes. Now, day homes, based on the advice of Dr. Hinshaw, the chief medical officer of health, they were able to remain open. The change that we made there through that time period was that when you would typically have a maximum of six children able to be in a day home, we expanded that to be six children plus your own, which is actually based on some of the other jurisdictions across the country who had that. We did check before we made changes like that, even temporary, to see what other provinces do, and that's something that does exist in other provinces as well although I do respect the fact that every province has a different approach to child care and different legislation, different regulations, different ratios. That was one of the things that we put in place, because if you're a parent who also runs a day home, you were able to still support the families that you would currently support but, with the closure of in-person classes, then not have to struggle to find additional supports. That was meant to be a temporary measure to really provide some continuity, some stability for parents across Alberta.

Really, those are the changes that we made around child care. Certainly, many of them were things that we heard before COVID

through that red tape reduction. I mean, we do talk a lot as a government about red tape reduction. I also talk about common sense. Sometimes, you know, we heard about the paperwork for accreditation. I heard one centre tell me that they had just had one centre accredited and they worked so hard, and then when they were going to open up their next centre just a couple of months after the first one they thought, "I'm going to take all of this exceptional learning from the last centre we just opened, and we're just going to build it all right in." They were told: "Well, we can't accredit you because it's not aspirational enough." They said: "Those are a lot of hoops. That's so subjective. You know, we want to open. We're in newer communities. These parents need child care." So I firmly believe that, absolutely, accessibility, affordability for those who need it, and high-quality child care is hugely important.

4:00

I also want to recognize that every single province across the country has a different interpretation of what that looks like. That's why I felt like it was so important to go out and talk to Albertans, to ask Albertans, the parents across this province who use child care, front-line early childhood educators as well as centre operators. We have a very different model than many other provinces, so I wanted to hear their feedback on not only this, but certainly that is one point of the discussion: which pieces of this are things that you want permanently included in the Child Care Licensing Act and the regulations?

Certainly, the member opposite, if you have any suggestions, I would encourage you to do – you may already have done the survey online. There's a survey online, but we're also taking online applications, and I welcome them from anywhere and anybody. It will be a good way to reduce some of the barriers but still make sure that we can keep kids safe and meet the needs of parents and operators all across the province, because the needs are definitely different. Some of these issues that already existed just became exacerbated during the pandemic, and they may be things that we want to look at doing long term.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any hon. members looking to join debate? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Give me one second. I was just getting ready.

The Deputy Chair: I was giving you time.

Mr. Deol: Thanks a lot. First of all, thank you for the time. I'm happy to rise in the House, and I appreciate the opportunity to add comments to Bill 24, COVID-19 Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. As we all know, the world today is going through a very challenging time. It's not only the first time. Let me say that. I was looking through the information, trying to search through how we are doing, and the history goes back 200 years. People around the globe have faced similar challenges in the past 100 years, in 1918, '57, '68, then in 2009. We are facing this very tough time once again at the end of 2019 to 2020.

The reason I said that I appreciate the opportunity and I'm happy to add my comments – I understand at times like this specifically the governments do have responsibilities to play their roles, and during these unprecedented, not normal times, government needs some, you know, flexibility.

My colleague from St. Albert during her comments stated that this is an omnibus bill that deals with a number of ministries and amends 15 acts. The purpose of this is to support the government's

response in response to the pandemic following the end of the state of public health emergency. We understand, as I stated, that with respect to what is being discussed in those 15 acts in hand, what we see is that the power is being given to those number of ministries – I don't know how many there are; quite a bit, seven ministries – so they can responsibly deal with the situations. It will create the mechanism. They have enough authorities to issue orders to take, you know, things under control. My focus or my argument is very much focused on: whatever we are discussing in this House, this is for the sake of those very ordinary people, Albertans, everyday Albertans, basically for the safety of those Albertans.

One of the very first changes when I saw – this is kind of setting, showing the set of patterns, the kind of changes, kind of amendments we have in this bill: the government is to be able to delay the annual report even though we know that, if I'm not wrong, we are already into the second phase of the relaunching strategy, and the public health emergency is going to be, you know, ending this month. I didn't understand why this government – what worries me is that whenever we give sweeping powers to the ministry, whatever mostly is being compromised is our accountability and transparency to the public. That is most of the time done in the name of the service to the people of Alberta.

When we are grasping the sweeping powers – I'm seeing in this bill the lack of oversight. As an example, this bill transfers powers to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, so with those powers, how are they going to impact people? How are they going to prevent and protect the people? What types of safety codes changes is he contemplating when we're discussing this? That is not clear. When we're discussing something and that is not very obvious, clearly mandated in the piece of legislation we are discussing, that really is worrisome for me because I saw personally that the government has failed in a number of ways. The government used the emergency situation to rush their budget through. I remember that I didn't have the opportunity – my opportunity, democratic rights were comprised. My critic portfolio: I was not allowed to debate and argue the estimates in the committees due to the situation.

4:10

But at the same time, the people of Alberta, the students, everyday workers, and the small businesses – and I know, like, we discussed the bill yesterday that is still discussing the contingency. I think it was exactly now the Commercial Tenancies Protection Act. Yeah. That will allow the commercial tenants not to get kicked out for just only two more months. That's not providing any help. That is even happening after lots of public outcry, an extensive amount of advocacy groups calling for help for those people. Some of the, you know, very important organizations, chamber of commerce: I know the government really enjoys referring to the findings of these very organizations, mostly, but this time I see that the voices of all those organizations got ignored.

My question is that when we have the authority, when we have the power to show the responsibility to take some action and we still haven't since March 12, since the first health emergency in Alberta was declared – now we are discussing a bill. There are a number of things I can bring related to child care and some of their staff. We had the powers. We had the authorities. We failed to do the service to the Albertans that needed it. Now we are asking for more powers without having any oversight. That will compromise the democratic rights of a number of institutions, sectors, individuals. How is the government going to answer? Why should we believe that the government is going to use these authorities in a way that will help them to respond back to the people after the health emergency is lifted?

Mr. Chair, one of the other amendments that is related to labour I've seen – as I said, this bill is very broad; it deals with seven ministries and a number of acts – extends COVID-related temporary layoff provisions from 120 days to 180 days. That is my very concern that I have been raising through my argument.

In this House, we rose many times. The dollars are already there in so many different jurisdictions in Canada from the federal government. I believe it's 10 days' paid sick leave for all those people. You know, they had to take the time off due to their COVID-related sickness, and the government has ignored it. There's not even discussion on this topic anymore. We understand that there is a situation where the government is proposing that the COVID-related layoffs can be extended now from 128 days to 188 days, so why is the government not engaging in the conversation at least to offer paid sick leave?

We agree that the transfer of those powers will be very much one-sided. What I'm worried about in this bill is, first, the safety of the people of Alberta who, I understand, as I said at the start, are going through a very difficult situation. The government needs changes, but that does not ensure that if we go ahead and make these changes, it's going to guarantee that the people of Alberta will be taken care of. There are a number of things we discussed on the Commercial Tenancies Protection Act. There was the opposition's eight-point small business proposal, and there were a number of advocacy groups, people, and communities, not only the people that voted for us but UCP supporters. Lots of small-business owners are UCP supporters. They're crying. Their businesses are going to fail. We still don't see the government stepping up to help those people, and the government is just offering the deferral of rent payments, kind of another addition to their debt, but they're still not willing to step up and participate in the federal Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program.

Daycares are part of small business and a vital part of our society, an incredibly important part of any healthy society. We can't even imagine in the current world a society without daycares. It's not only for working people. It's not only for parents. I have seen on many other occasions like when we're attending social functions, councils, conventions that child care is valued by many people. If child care is not accessible to Albertans, how will those people pay the price? It will be a barrier to many women to come out and use their education and their skills to contribute to this society.

4:20

I have given my feedback from the folks, from the friends who are running child care in this province, and our government has failed to respond to those child care, daycare operators. The daycares have been reopened, I think, for three or four weeks now. Each and every person speaking to us says that their business is not self-sustainable. They do not have enough kids. There are a number of reasons. The parents are still home, and the subsidy is not being provided in a way that it was provided to the parents and to the daycares before the pandemic. That is actually not only a barrier to the families, but it's also having a very negative impact on our small-scale businesses and the daycare sector. The people call me. I don't know if they're calling the ministry.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has risen to join debate.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to rise to speak to Bill 24, the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2020. You know, I have to

comment on the fact that this is an omnibus piece of legislation, making amendments across 15 different acts, which encompasses about seven ministries. I mean, I do realize that because of the pandemic the government does have to bring forward probably some legislation around its response and maybe some of the changes they made, temporarily solidifying those. So perhaps I won't be quite as critical of them on this piece of omnibus legislation other than the fact that they brought forward a whole lot of other omnibus legislation. Members of the government bench and members of the government caucus in the 29th Legislature were very, very critical of the previous government for bringing forward in one piece of legislation many changes that only occurred within one ministry. Nonetheless, we are here, and I do understand that they have to make some potential changes here.

One of the first things that I do want to just quickly address is the fact that Bill 24 doesn't seem to address some of the changes that we've now come to realize may have been, shall we say, an overstep by the government around Bill 10, the ability for, you know, ministers to make changes to legislation, delete legislation, or even create brand new legislation without the oversight of this Assembly. They've been called offside on that. They've even agreed that perhaps they were offside on that. This would have been a perfect chance with which to make some of those changes, so it's unfortunate that we're not seeing those here.

I'm also a little concerned about the delay in the government's annual report. You know, we've heard a lot of great statements by the government around transparency, being accountable to the citizens of Alberta, yet we look at the pattern of how we've jammed through a budget here in this last period with very little opportunity to actually scrutinize it. And now here we are, and we're going to delay yet again an annual report around that. That's unfortunate, and I don't think it gives Albertans much confidence in this government's ability to try and stick to its word.

One of the other things I did want to look at, and I'm glad we had a chance to hear a little bit around this, is our child care providers. One of the things, Mr. Chair, that I've always found very useful is when you've had the ability to see a process evolve over time, especially when you were there when the whole thing began, or at the very least you have access to somebody that went through that process. I have been very fortunate. I've had access to somebody who was there in the beginning. One of my child care providers has been in the community for the last 50 years, and they remember the accreditation program. This was something that was driven by the industry itself in terms of trying to distinguish themselves from other providers.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

This was a way to say: well, everybody is absolutely at the level that they need to be at, but this shows that we're at a little bit of a higher level. That was a bit of the history lesson that I saw there. By eliminating the whole thing, what we're really saying is that we just want everybody to be average, with nothing to strive for. There have never been any requirements to go after accreditation. You're not forced to do that, but it was something to distinguish yourself amongst other providers. Like I said, I've had that ability to tap into that little bit of a history lesson, shall we say.

You know, we have heard about how important child care is to Albertans, and this pandemic has certainly put a very great strain on that, but in terms of wanting to provide access to hard-working Albertans, I must say that when we eliminated the \$25-a-day program, as is happening now, this same provider at the time was struggling greatly. They were at anywhere from half to maybe two-thirds capacity, and there were very serious concerns that perhaps

they weren't going to be able to keep going in the future. When this program came along and they voluntarily decided to change to be able to access this program, they went to a waiting list, so quite a leap in terms of providing access to child care for folks that need it greatly.

I remember the day that they announced that, Mr. Chair. I was there. I remember a single mom coming in there, and when she heard the news, she started to cry. She said: "I was thinking about going back to school. I was almost certain I wasn't going to be able to make it, but I was going to try anyway. Because of the change and the addition of this program, you just put me through school." That's a pretty powerful story.

You know, yes, we absolutely want to keep everybody safe. We want to make sure that we're providing an absolute level that every child care provider needs to be at, but from what I understand based on that individual that was there from the beginning and part of that, the accreditation program was a way to kind of just bump it up to that next level, and if you wanted to attain that level, you had the ability to do that.

Now, the other part here that, of course, I have to say I got, you know, very concerned about – any time I start hearing about changes to the Safety Codes Act, my hair stands up. What are we now going to take away that will put Albertans at risk? As the red tape reduction critic I was convinced by the minister that the mandate of that ministry was to make sure that we don't remove things that will put Albertans at risk. That was the mandate of the red tape ministry.

4:30

You know, when I'm looking at things like this – and I realize that we're quite along in the process here. I would love to hear about how this was vetted through the ministry and if the red tape reduction ministry felt that that might be a risk of violating the mandate of that ministry. I can't help but wonder: why are we delaying the annual report? It seems the Auditor General has been able to get their work done. That's been clearly demonstrated, so I'm wondering why the government can't seem to get theirs done.

I would love to hear from the Municipal Affairs minister around these safety code changes. You know, give me the ability to go back to my constituents and Albertans as a whole and say that the changes that are being made here will not put them at risk and here's why. Don't just tell me that, oh, the changes will be fine. No. Not good enough. Show me why they won't put Albertans at risk.

This pandemic has certainly seen challenges within the child care system. We need to know what's going on there. Let's just lay out the plan: this is where we're heading going forward, and this is how long it's going to take us to get there. We can't wait any longer.

You know, I will certainly listen with intent as to how this proceeds. I'm hoping we'll see some answers to some of the questions that not only myself have risen on but some of my colleagues have brought up here. Hopefully, I will feel confident enough to be able to go back to Albertans and let them know whether this piece of legislation will fit their needs or if not. With that, Mr. Chair, I will take my seat. Hopefully, we will get some answers.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 24?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 24 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Acting Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? That is also carried.

Bill 17

Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020

The Acting Chair: Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A2 on Bill 17? I see the Member for Edmonton . . .

Ms Sweet: Manning.

The Acting Chair: . . . Manning. Go ahead, Member.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my honour to rise and to speak to amendment A2, specifically in regard to when we are talking about formal patients, detaining of the person, and admission certificates. So amendment A2, what it does is that – currently in the legislation it allows an individual to continue to be held under an admission certificate in a hospital even if the certificate has not been validated by the board or been validated to be completed. With this amendment, with A2, I had added a clause and requested that the government consider the clause where if a form is not completed effectively, if the certificate has not been completely filled out appropriately, or any of those matters are missing out of the certificate that an individual no longer be detained in a hospital.

Now, the reason for that, again, is going back to the piece of legislation and the court challenge that occurred in 2018. What had happened was that part of the certificate was not actually filled out appropriately, and the policies and the regulations weren't followed. What continued to happen past that is that the individual continued to be held in hospital even though the documentation was not completely filled out.

Now, we all know in this House that admission certificates are very restrictive around the civil liberties of an individual. In fact, the Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020, actually is able to detain an individual in a hospital setting easier and more quickly than an individual that may have committed a crime. A person who commits a crime is allowed to have due process. They're allowed to have a lawyer. They're allowed to go to court. They're allowed to defend themselves. Under the Mental Health Act if an individual is deemed to be at risk of themselves or another, then a psychiatrist and, soon too if this legislation passes, a medical professional determines that an individual can be held in the hospital.

Now, of course we understand why that is. The issue, though, is that if the documentation is not filled out appropriately, if the assessment cannot be proven to have been done effectively or efficiently or to the level of what the certificate requires and it does go in front of the board and it is deemed that the certificate has not been filled out appropriately and it is deemed that the individual may not have had the appropriate assessment completed, then an individual should not be held in hospital. This is a way to ensure that when these assessments are being completed, all the requirements are being followed effectively, and we are actually protecting the individual that is being assessed.

The amendment is pretty clear. If the certificate is deemed to be not meeting the validity of the board, then the individual and their certificate no longer stand, and the individual is able to return to the community, family member, whatever that is and/or would need to be required to have a reassessment and a new certificate issued. I think it's pretty clear. I think that this supports individuals and patients that may be accessing the Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020. I think it also addresses some of the issues that the court raised in regard to people being detained in hospital under these

certificates without due process, so I would encourage all members of the House to support it.

The Acting Chair: Thanks, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? I see the hon. minister of mental health.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, hon. member. Thanks for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this. I'd like to begin by reminding the House that the current amendment that the opposition is putting on the floor – in fact, when they were in government, they did a mental health review. They did nothing about what they're talking about now. Nothing came in their sort of time, when they had the opportunity to do something, but this time with our government, Bill 17, we're addressing the court ruling that finds the balance between individual rights and also the protections for individual safety. We consulted with thousands of physicians, service providers, and others in terms of getting the balance. It came with this modernized amendment that has that balance there.

The proposed amendment addresses concerns raised by the court, and they go further, making real improvements in care that will benefit patients and their families without legislative amendments. Sections of the Mental Health Act struck down by the court decision were no longer in force. This would mean that Albertans at risk of harm to themselves or others would not be able to be involuntarily detained for treatment after September 30, 2020. These are important steps that strengthen the protection of patients' rights and improve efficiency in the mental health care system in our province.

4:40

Mr. Chair, these amendments put forward by the opposition on the floor right now are not needed. When they play those political games, amending insignificant things, you know, just playing the games there, it actually, to me, is a waste of time. If they wanted to help make the protection of patients really balanced with their rights, I would invite them to join the government to support this rather than playing around with no real substance here.

I'm going to recommend that our colleagues vote down this amendment and keep our original one as the most balanced one that addresses both sides of the issue.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Well, since the associate minister wants to open the Pandora's box around partisanship, let's be clear. This is not political games. I have also spoken to many members in the community, many psychiatrists, many people working within mental health and addictions. It is where I came from. This is not about partisanship. This is not about politics. I truly believe that individuals that are impacted by this legislation have a right to be protected. They have a right to their civil liberties. Just because someone has mental health concerns does not mean that they should be treated as criminals because they are not. When I talk about the fact that someone is being detained on a certificate that is not completed and I'm just asking the government to say, "You know what? That's fair. We probably should make sure the documentation that supports this person being held in a hospital under certificate is completed," I don't think that's partisan games. That is protecting the rights of these individuals that are accessing this legislation.

I'm sorry, Minister, if that's how you feel, that I'm turning this into politics, but it's not. Unfortunately, I have like six or seven more amendments. Again, not because of politics but because people have a right to their civil liberties. They have a right to

protections, and they have a right to be treated with dignity, and I believe that this legislation, with the gaps and looking at the court ruling, does not address the civil liberties and the dignity that these individuals deserve.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I would encourage all members of this House to stop trying to say that this is a partisan issue. It isn't. Stop using it as an argument to not support the amendments, and actually look at the content. This is about individual civil liberties and their dignity. These are people. We are talking about people that are impacted by this legislation that is extremely intrusive. Stop with the partisan stuff. Be compassionate. Just look at the amendments and just actually process what I'm trying to say. That's all I ask for, and I wish we would stop with this rhetoric.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members wishing to join debate on A2?

Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Moving back to the main bill, Bill 17, Mental Health Amendment Act. Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise to propose another amendment to Bill 17, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. If you could please read it into the record, and then continue with your comments. There are still 19 minutes on this one.

Ms Renaud: Okay. I move on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning that Bill 17, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020, be amended by striking out section 14 and substituting the following:

14 Section 9.4 is repealed and the following is substituted:

9.4(1) A community treatment order may be amended by a qualified health professional after consultation with a psychiatrist who examined the person subject to the community treatment order pursuant to section 9.1 and in accordance with the regulations.

(2) The requirements of section 9.1(d) to (f) continue to apply, with the necessary changes, to the amendment of a community treatment order.

Mr. Chair, I would just like to add, you know, my comments in line with what the Member for Edmonton-Manning just noted earlier. It's that, really, these amendments are, contrary to what the associate minister is alleging, in no way political but actually an attempt to make this piece of legislation better, which, I might remind him, is our job.

I think the associate minister should well understand the importance of community treatment plans and orders, and I think that, you know, it doesn't need a lot of explanation to highlight the need for the same psychiatrist to be involved in this. I understand the desire of government to expand the scope of people that are involved in this work, but, again, I think that some oversight, as identified in this amendment, would go a long way. On that, I would encourage my colleagues to vote for this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members looking to join debate on this A3 amendment to Bill 17?

Seeing none, I am prepared to ask the question on amendment A3 as proposed by the hon. Member for St. Albert on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Moving back to Bill 17, are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be proposing another amendment. I want to speak again to the Mental Health Act, and this was actually a question that I asked the minister in the House this afternoon around consent. The reason that this is – oh, yeah. You want a copy of it?

The Deputy Chair: Before we continue on with what will be amendment A4 . . .

Ms Sweet: Okay. I'll wait.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you could please rise and read the amendment into the record. For the benefit of debate this will be referred to as A4.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Amendment A4 is referenced as the Member for Edmonton-Manning to move that Bill 17, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020, be amended in section 11 in the proposed section 9.01(1) by striking out “that a formal patient is provided with a written, individualized treatment plan” and substituting:

that a formal patient is provided with a written, individualized treatment plan and that the formal patient, or a person referred to in section 28(1) who is acting on behalf of the formal patient, is informed of their right to object to any treatment set out in the treatment plan.

Again, Mr. Chair, this goes back to my question that I was asking in the House this afternoon of the Minister of Health, when I asked about consent. When I've looked through the legislation, there is actually no reference for an individual to provide consent for treatment. There is a way for an individual to voluntarily admit themselves, and then in that case a certificate wouldn't be required because an individual would be voluntarily admitting themselves for treatment. What this amendment does is it allows for a person to object to treatment and make sure that an individual is informed of the treatment plan that they are being asked to be a part of.

What it also does is that it allows someone to act on their behalf. That would be similar to a second decision-maker. I've been explaining this to people in the last little bit around – you know, if you think about if you were in a car accident and you were unable to say whether or not you wanted treatment, it would then go to your next of kin, so your spouse, your child, whoever you've identified as being the individual that can act on your behalf.

When we look at the act, we look at the fact that sometimes people do need a little bit of support. They need an advocate. You know, that's totally fair, but what should be happening within the mental health system and working with individuals is that when you're talking to them about being admitted under a certificate and then you're looking at their treatment plans, you're sitting down with that patient, and you're having a conversation with them about what a treatment plan looks like, why it is they're being admitted. Maybe they're able to identify that they do need the help that is being indicated and that they do actually think that the treatment plan will help them. Well, they should be able to provide consent, just like any one of us would be able to provide consent for anything.

4:50

Consent is a fundamental rule that we all follow in our lives. We ask for permission. We ask for permission in our relationships. We ask for permission from others, all of those things. To provide consent and ask an individual if they consent to a medical treatment where they will be receiving medication that could alter their behaviour, alter their perception of the world – they should have a right to provide consent. If an individual is deemed that they don't have the capacity in that moment – and it may be part of why they are being admitted under a certificate – then they have a right to have an individual consent on their behalf, no different than a child does from their parents, no different than you and I do with our spouses. They have a right to have a person in their life act on their behalf and provide consent for medical treatment.

That is ultimately what this act is. This is an act that will admit people into hospital and provide medical assistance to help them manage their mental health. Why wouldn't we want people to have the right to consent? Why wouldn't we want to make sure that the legislation requires that either they provide consent or, if they are deemed not to have the capacity to provide consent, someone is able to provide that on their behalf? If they don't have an individual in their life, if they don't have an advocate or a family member that is able to provide their consent, then the government or the hospital or the institution that is providing the treatment plan has a responsibility to find an advocate that can do that on their behalf, whether that's the mental health advocate's role, whether that is access to a lawyer through legal aid that can act on their behalf. They have a right to have someone to ensure that they can provide consent.

This is not unique in Canada. B.C. does this. It's in their legislation. Ontario has a whole act on consent that is related to the mental health services that they provide in the province of Ontario. The change that I am requesting that all members of the House accept is the fact that this is a fundamental basic right that every individual has. All I am asking the members of this House to do is to accept an amendment that requires consent to be provided. I don't know why you would deny that. Why would you deny an individual the right to provide consent? Why would you deny the right of an advocate or a family member to provide consent on somebody's behalf? What is within the legislation, within this amendment that you wouldn't want to make sure that people have the right to consent to medical treatment?

This bill is intrusive. I've already said that. This bill hospitalizes people under a form and potentially also under a community treatment order in the community, where they are required and actually can have legal ramifications if they don't follow their treatment plans. They should have the right to consent. It's not in the legislation. This is why I asked the minister this afternoon about what he was doing to ensure that there was consent. He didn't have an answer today. The problem is that the reason he doesn't have an answer is because it's not actually in the act. Now people can be held under an assessment in a hospital with zero consultation, zero work in a relationship between the medical professionals and the individual because you actually are denying them the right to consent.

I don't think that anybody in this House would be okay with receiving medical treatment without your consent. I don't think that anybody in this House would be okay with your child having treatment, a medical treatment or a medical procedure, done without providing consent and making sure that you're informed. I don't think that there's any individual in this House that would want your spouse or your partner to have a medical procedure or receive medical treatment, whether it's medication or not, without someone

in your family providing consent. So why is it okay for this? Why is it okay for individuals who are impacted by the Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020, to not have that same courtesy, that same right that every single person in Alberta has when it comes to consent? This is the only piece of legislation where it's denied.

Again, this isn't about partisanship, as the associate minister would like to say. This is actually about ensuring that people have the right to consent to their treatment, to anything that is happening to themselves as individuals, to their individual bodies. They have the right to give permission and, if not, they have a right to an advocate to provide that consent on their behalf.

Again, I would ask all members of the House to support this amendment and allow people the basic right of consent.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the hon. Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has risen to speak.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you again for giving me the chance to share some of my thoughts on the amendment. Let me begin by reflecting again about why we're doing this. The issue is really about striking a balance between individuals who suffer from mental illness to protect their individual rights versus when they are in a state of being out of control, where they could be harmful to themselves and to their family members and to communities. That's the intent. I think the judge has concerns that when we loosely define mental disorder, it infringes, and people can widely interpret what it is and apply it in the wrong way, so they asked us to sort of tighten that part up a little bit. That was the main reason for the amendment.

The other part is that we recognize families are an important part of supporting people recovering from mental illness, so by modernizing the act we do recognize the role of family, the compassion that we need to show when we deal with those difficult parts. You know, after putting all those questions through online, through special meetings, consulting with physicians, consulting with families who have lived experience, and providers, where we landed on is recognizing the compassionate part that we need to show. I fully support that, recognizing the care and support that families can sort of add in helping our health care system to help people to recover and be safe for themselves and safe for their families and others.

That's where the current amendment sort of stopped at. If we go too far to one end for an individual's interest part, then it's difficult to really get to the professionals and the specialists in terms of using their best exercise of knowledge to protect patients. Vice versa, you know, if the definition of what constitutes a mental disorder is so widely interpreted, without a clear definition, then it really infringes on the other side of it. I can't emphasize enough that it's a fine balance between the two.

I recognize that, you know, perhaps the opposition member is wanting to contribute to this, but I just want to point out that we didn't take this lightly. When the previous government had this, they sat on it for four years. They didn't do anything about it. We are only trying to modernize it, keep the balance, keep a kind of new improvement on this, and then they have this endless amendment after amendment. I hate to call whatever that behaviour is, but every member in this House probably will see that.

I would say that if you truly want to show your compassion, support families, support a balanced approach on this, I wholeheartedly invite the opposition members to join us to support our amendment, and not, you know, going one after another within a minute, within 30 seconds, where something else will be amended.

5:00

If you're truly interested in making the system better, take your time, contact my office, work with some solutions so we can have some meaningful dialogue on this. When I see that every 30 seconds you've got another motion on the floor, this is – I'm going to leave it to our hon. members to think about what kind of behaviour that is, how sincere that is to sort of come to some resolutions. We took our time. We consulted more than 3,000 people, from doctors, from nurses, from health professionals, from family members, from people who lived with the experience.

We come to this stage, this amendment. I'm going to say again that I won't support this amendment, and I urge the hon. members on the other side to give some hard, sort of compassionate thinking. Stop doing this and get on with business. Let's have our act in place. Let's protect our citizens. Let's give the power and compassion to our community to do the right thing.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. associate minister.

I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen to debate.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. I'll just be quick. Just on a couple of comments that the associate minister made about reaching out to the office: I did. I was told it wasn't your office, that it was actually the Minister of Health's office, and the minister was notified of my amendment. So I did reach out. I have tried to work with the minister. Also, last evening, when there was an amendment put on the floor, we were asked to adjourn so that the minister could review the amendment. Again, we have been working with your side on this, which, again, is why I ask you to please stop trying to say that we're not. We are. This is not a partisan issue. I have reached out to you, Minister, and I have tried to have conversations. I know it didn't happen with you specifically, Minister, because I was specifically told that you weren't the minister responsible for the act. To be clear . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but in response to the comments, just through the chair, please.

Ms Sweet: But I'm just responding to the comments that were made directly to me as the member, which seemed to be let go at that point.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I allowed it for a significant period of time, and I'm now asking that the House returns to ensuring that comments are made through the chair.

Ms Sweet: So, Mr. Chair, there is that piece around that.

The other piece of this is that the only reason this act is currently in the House on behalf of the government is because of the court challenge that mandated it to happen. But as we're also aware with the mandate of the courts, the courts actually gave an extension due to the appeal that is currently happening, so the act didn't have to come in right now. More time could have been considered. In fact, because there is an appeal in front of the judge, we don't know what the outcome of that is going to be. If that appeal comes back, this bill will then have to come back again and be amended again. As much as I appreciate the government saying that they took their time and they looked at the court challenges, I also have taken my time. I've also spoken to people, including people that were involved in the court cases, and I understand what the concerns are.

Again, compassion would be allowing people to have consent to a medical procedure that this bill requires to happen. That's compassion. What isn't compassion is trying to keep saying that we could have done this when we were government and all of those

things. It just doesn't make any sense. Like, I just fundamentally do not understand how providing someone consent to a medical treatment is a partisan issue. I just don't. It was missed in the act, and that happens. Things happen. People miss pieces in legislation; we amend them. We've actually managed to somehow amend bills in this House previously. Again, it's not about being compassionate. I am very passionate about this issue, and I'm trying to contain myself, to be honest, about the fact that just simply consent is all that we're asking this government to provide to individuals with mental health concerns. That's it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to A4? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall has risen.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also want to speak to this amendment and echo what my colleague said, that it's an important piece of legislation. The work we are doing: we are doing our best to make sure that this bill addresses the concerns that were reason for court after court, that they used to strike this piece of legislation. My colleague for Edmonton-Manning has worked in this field. She is bringing in not only constituents' views, but she is also bringing in her practical experience, years of practical experience of dealing with these issues, of dealing with the system. When we are proposing these amendments, we are trying to make sure that we are getting this piece of legislation right because, as the minister has also indicated, we need to have a neat balance there. We need to address these issues with the attention they deserve, and there are a number of issues that are at stake dealing with this piece of legislation.

There are Charter rights at stake. Section 7 was one of the reasons the court used to strike this legislation down. That deals with the life, liberty, and security of the person. Then in section 15 grounds were also used in this legislation where the equality of an individual to decide what kind of treatment or what they want to do about their well-being. That was one of the grounds that this legislation falls short on. Then arbitrary detention, section 9 of the Charter, is at play. Section 10, availability and access to legal counsel, is at play.

These are all important rights that are enshrined in the Charter. They are constitutional rights, and when we are fixing this piece of legislation, we should make sure that we are not infringing on those rights. The Charter itself says that whenever we have to infringe on any of those rights, that should never be done lightly and should only be done in a way that can be justified in a democratic society. I think choice is fundamental, and that was the reason, I think, that this piece of legislation was struck down in the first place. Every individual should have a choice to make decisions about their health and well-being. That's their basic fundamental right. Just because they have a mental illness, they should not be treated differently. That would be against the equality sections of the Charter.

That's why this amendment is important and why I'm speaking in favour of this amendment. It's not just that we are wanting to do some changes; it's that we owe it to all those who are suffering with mental illnesses to make sure that their rights are upheld as best we can.

I urge all my colleagues to support this amendment. Uphold the choice for those who are struggling with mental health, trying to get the help that they need. Don't make it that difficult for them that they will be hesitant to even go seek help. That's a fundamental provision that will ensure that people will be confident, people will not be afraid to go to seek help if they know that their choices will be respected. That's what this amendment is about, and I hope that the House will consider voting in favour of it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. We are on amendment A4.

Seeing no one willing to continue the debate, then, on amendment A4 as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, are you agreed?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:09 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Deol	Phillips	Schmidt
Irwin	Renaud	Sweet
Loyola	Sabir	

Against the motion:

Amery	Long	Schow
Barnes	Luan	Schulz
Getson	Nally	Sigurdson, R.J.
Glasgo	Orr	Smith
Glubish	Rehn	Stephan
Guthrie	Reid	Turton
Hanson	Rosin	Walker
Horner	Rutherford	Yao
Loewen	Sawhney	Yaseen

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 27
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Any members wishing to speak to Bill 17 in Committee of the Whole? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to this bill. I'll preface by saying that in particular my colleague from Edmonton-Manning has worked in this field, and many other of my colleagues also have experience in a relevant area. We have reached out to our constituents in our ridings, to stakeholders in our ridings, to individuals and organizations who have an interest in this piece of legislation. As MLAs we also represent constituents that will be impacted by this piece of legislation. It's for that reason that we are trying our best to make this piece of legislation better legislation and to make sure that the things the court pointed out in their decision while striking this legislation down are accounted for.

For instance, the court clearly identified that the review and detention provisions generally are offside of sections 7, 9, or 10 of the Charter, but they also specified that section 2, sections 4(1), 4(2), 8(1), 8(3), 38(1), and 41(1) infringe sections 7, 9, or 10 of the Charter. They also highlighted that generally there's a lack of community support for mental illnesses. In that analysis they pointed out a number of things that need to be amended in order to make this piece of legislation compliant with Charter rights.

I will start with the section 15 grounds that were used to strike some of the provisions down. Section 15 of the Charter guarantees that

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

It clearly says there that you cannot be differentially treated just based on a mental disability.

5:30

The court clearly identified that some of these provisions did discriminate against individuals with mental health concerns based on their mental abilities. On this side of the House we tried to put in consent to make sure that individuals are able to make choices about their health and well-being and that they are not judged based on their mental abilities, that they are not disadvantaged based on their different or varied mental disabilities. That's the reason that we are trying to get these amendments in and get this bill right.

Also, the court analysis clearly showed that some of these provisions were offside section 9 of the Charter, which says, "Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned." In this particular case, J.H. – there was a publication ban, so the individual's name was not published – is a 49-year-old First Nation person. He walks in to seek help, and he gets detained for a long period of time. Court analysis clearly shows that his detention was arbitrary because the provision of this act didn't provide proper mechanisms, didn't provide or set out the process that will be compliant with this prohibition against arbitrary detention and imprisonment. That was the reason the court recommended that a review of detention provisions needed to be reworked. Again, it's an important right.

The analysis also showed that some of these provisions were also offside section 10 of the Charter, which states:

10. Everyone has the right on arrest or detention
 - (a) to be informed promptly of the reasons therefor;
 - (b) to retain and instruct counsel without delay and to be informed of that right; and
 - (c) to have the validity of the detention determined by way of habeas corpus and to be released if the detention is not lawful.

In this particular case J.H. was not afforded these important rights. He was detained based on his mental health. He was not given the reasons. He was not given the rights that our Constitution or Charter requires to be afforded when we are detaining somebody. That was the reason the detention provisions were shut down by the court.

Another important provision of the Charter was engaged in the court analysis, that

7. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

Certainly, when you're detaining somebody against their will without due process, arbitrarily, section 7 of the Charter is engaged because their security, their liberty is at stake. All these provisions were the grounds for the court decision, and it was with that that the court sent it back to the Legislature, to make sure that our review provisions, our detention provisions are respectful of the rights of those with mental illness.

When we don't respect those rights, then there comes, well, the stigma, then there comes that hesitation from people acknowledging or seeking mental health supports. It's for that reason as well that we must get this right. We must send a clear signal that mental illness is no different than any other illness and that when our people face mental illness, their government, their institution will be there to help them deal with that like we do with any other illness. That's the important first step, to deal with that stigma and deal with that hesitation that most individuals with mental illness face.

It's for those reasons that it's important that we get this right and not just get up and read the same old talking points, that it's some kind of partisan thing, that we are doing partisan politics. We sit on the other side of the House. We belong to different parties, so there may be some partisan stuff as well, but this is something that we owe to all those who are suffering from mental health and still

unable to seek help. We owe it to them. We can leave those partisan differences aside and work collaboratively to get this right.

And with that backdrop I would like to move an amendment on behalf of my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Manning. I have the requisite number of copies of that amendment, and once you get it, I can read it into the record.

The Chair: Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A5. Hon. member, please proceed.

Mr. Sabir: I'm moving on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning that Bill 17, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2020, be amended by striking out section 15 and substituting the following:

- 15 Section 9.6 is amended
 - (a) in subsection (1) by striking out "If a psychiatrist has reasonable grounds to believe that a person who is subject to a community treatment order has failed to comply with the community treatment order, the psychiatrist may" and substituting "If a qualified health professional, after consulting with a psychiatrist who has examined the person who is subject to the community treatment order, has reasonable grounds to believe that the person has failed to comply with the community treatment order, the qualified health professional may";
 - (b) in subsection (2), by striking out "psychiatrist" wherever it occurs and substituting "qualified health professional";
 - (c) in subsection (4) by striking out "physicians" and substituting "qualified health professionals".

5:40

Again, with all other amendments that we brought forward, I can assure the House that while working through these amendments, the only consideration was what has been judged by the court in this decision, how best we can comply with that pronouncement, that judgment. The second consideration was that we have reached out to stakeholders, to those who are entrusted in this piece of legislation. Certainly, we also have the benefit of some of our colleagues who have worked in the process and who actually know how all of this process works. They have advocated for these changes even outside this House as well when they were practising as social workers, when they were dealing with mental health issues out in the community.

What this provision will do is that if a qualified health professional is making an assessment, it will make sure that they are doing it in consultation with a psychiatrist who would be able to use his or her expertise and be able to provide a second opinion or second thought on the health professional's decision in light of his expertise. I think this one is important because this relates to the provisions that were the subject of the Charter challenge. It also takes into account the general observation of the court that anything relating to the review provisions within this piece of legislation and things relating to the detention provisions need to be looked into, and we need to make sure that those provisions are in compliance with the Charter rights and freedoms.

Again, when we're making somebody subject to community treatment orders, it has a bearing on their liberty, and their constitutionally protected Charter rights under section 7 are certainly engaged. If we keep them under a treatment order, their rights under section 9 are engaged. What we are trying to do here is make sure that the process we have while dealing with community treatment orders takes into account these important Charter provisions, these important rights, the right not to be arbitrarily detained; these important rights to life, liberty, and security of the person.

These amendments will improve this legislation, will improve this process. From a practical standpoint it will make mental health supports more accessible when different professionals are working together, when qualified professionals are engaged, and when we are making consultations with psychiatrists as part of that decision along with other health professionals who may be dealing first-hand and who may be on the front lines dealing with those individuals.

This amendment will certainly help us improve the process that the court wanted us to improve. This amendment will certainly make it better for individuals seeking mental health to get the supports they need.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Nally: Madam Chair, I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Nally: I move that the committee rise and report Bill 24 and report progress on Bill 15 and Bill 17.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 24. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 15 and Bill 17. I wish to table the copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 7

Responsible Energy Development Amendment Act, 2020

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the Minister of Energy to move third reading of Bill 7, the Responsible Energy Development Amendment Act, 2020.

The passing of this bill will help achieve one of our government's key platform items: holding the Alberta Energy Regulator accountable for unnecessary delays in assessing project applications. It is vital for our government to restore predictability to the regulatory process without sacrificing rigour. The passage of this bill would provide certainty for producers investing in Alberta by addressing concerns about unnecessary delays as a result of needless red tape and ineffective processes in the AER's review of project applications.

[The Speaker in the chair]

At a time when we're facing unprecedented challenges, Mr. Speaker, due to historically low oil prices and the impacts of

COVID-19, it's more important now than ever to set our province up for long-term success once we turn the corner towards economic recovery. The AER must continue to fulfill obligations to protect public safety and the environment. To be clear, the regulator's obligations to fully consider social and economic effects and the effects of an activity on the environment and on landowners are unchanged. This legislation would help put Alberta back on the right track by strengthening our province's reputation as a responsible energy producer that provides consistent, predictable regulation for development.

At this point I'd like to thank all my colleagues in the House for supporting this bill. With that, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks.

Thank you.

5:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity has moved third reading, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy, of Bill 7. Is there anyone else wishing to add comments to the debate? I see the hon. the Member for Calgary-McCall has risen

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the third reading of Bill 7, responsible energy development. We have seen significant challenges in our resource sector, and there are a number of reasons for that. They can be falling oil prices, the supply glut because of the price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia, slowing demand because of COVID-19, and also the lack of takeaway capacity in our system, that has remained an issue for a while now.

Successive Conservative governments, whether they were in the province, whether they were in federal government, failed to address these challenges of takeaway capacity and issues facing our industry although they claim many other things. When we look at their record, they didn't do anything to plan for the future, to address the challenges that industry is facing.

In 2015, when we became government, we singularly focused on this issue of takeaway capacity. We worked with the federal government. We worked with Albertans. We worked with indigenous communities. We addressed issues, environmental concerns. We worked with all Albertans instead of just being in the pocket of some few stakeholders, and it was because of that work that we are seeing progress on the issue of Trans Mountain pipeline. When we started that work, there were 4 in 10 Canadians who were in favour of that project. The then Premier, now Leader of the Official Opposition, went coast to coast to coast to make a case for that Trans Mountain pipeline. Because of that advocacy, there are now 7 in 10 Canadians who support that project.

That work that we did was done by the Department of Energy. We didn't need to set up any energy war room. We didn't need to go at war with other people. We just needed to make a better case. We just needed to advocate better. Certainly, the results are very clear, and if we are seeing a project, a resource development project, moving forward in the 60 years' history of Alberta, that's Trans Mountain pipeline. That was after the failures of successive Conservative governments here in Alberta and in the federal government.

The reason I brought up that project: while working on that project, we learned many things. There's no doubt that we need these projects to move in a reasonable time frame. That's really critical. We want to have these projects move in a reasonable time frame, as timely as practical. That's important for project proponents. That's important to create certainty for resource development. That's important to create certainty in financial markets. At the same time, it's also important that all these considerations be balanced with the other interests, other concerns

at hand. Those are indigenous consultations. Those are Albertans as owners, their concerns. Those are environmental concerns. All those things also need to be balanced.

When I talk about certainty, project certainty, there was a project, Energy East: the federal government, Conservative government then, rushed through and approved it. But what happens when we rush things through, when we walk roughshod on indigenous rights, when we ignore our constitutional obligations? Then things can end up in courts. In 2013 or '14 was the decision about Energy East, that clearly sets out the reason for the failure of that project. It's a long decision, and for the benefit of everyone the ratio of the case, the critical point of the case was that the federal Conservative government then didn't do the indigenous consultations right, and

that was reason that project didn't go through. Certainly, that delay cost hugely, and that project is no longer at play.

When we talk about investor certainty, take the Keystone XL example. It's a good project. It will add takeaway capacity. The Alberta energy sector wants it. Companies want to develop it. But because of those delays, that uncertainty that is facing this project . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 3(1) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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